

"Yes, madam."

"And were you not afraid?"

"Afraid! of what?"

And there was that in her manner that showed she was already quite capable of taking care of herself.

Where is the Parisienne who would venture to go from Paris to St. Cloud alone?

English women have the same temperament and the same education as the American. It is not rare to see English girls who have been alone to the Indies and back. I once met in England a young girl, who, when I asked her what she went to India for, replied, with the greatest naivete:

"I went to find a husband, and did not succeed."

These young girls are much better armed against danger from libertines than are ours. While still quite young they are taught to protect themselves. British manners allow young girls to have recourse to a thousand little insinuating ways to win a husband; but they know full well that to attain their ends they must make themselves respected, which they find it easy to do by confining their innocent rogueries within the limits prescribed by true feminine modesty.

But once married, good-by to stolen glances, to gentle but expressive pressures of the hand, and all the rest. All their arrows are immediately quivered, never again to be withdrawn; the flirt of yesterday is to-day a staid matron. Her period of romance is passed. She immures herself within her own interior as in a fortress, just at the time when French women begin to throw off restraint, and to feel that they are their own mistresses. In England coquetry ceases at the time when it begins in France, which accounts for its being double the age on one side of the channel that it is on the other.

#### **GIRLS OF THE PERIOD.**

A French lady writes thus of the girls of the period:

I was at a reunion the other evening, where I saw a young American girl, not more than sixteen years old, who had just arrived in Paris. She had come all the way from San Francisco, accompanied only by a brother two years younger than herself, and seemed quite incapable of understanding the astonishment of the ladies who questioned her regarding her journey.

"What! you travelled six thousand miles alone with your little brother?"

## GOOSEBERRY TARTS.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

"DEAR me, Phebe, are you asleep?" said my mother, in a tone of exasperation. "Here's your father down sick with the rheumatism, Dick has cut his hand nearly off, the dressmaker's in the sitting-room with a dress to fit, and nobody to fit it to; there isn't a mouthful to eat in the house, and there's all his folks from Newburg coming to tea, and you go about as if you were dreaming, and the world wasn't upside down! This comes of your sitting up so late nights last week with Reuben Haddam. I shall go distracted!"

If I had been asleep, I was fairly aroused now, and rushing into the kitchen, I exerted myself to the utmost in trying to bring the world back to its feet again, and relieve the overburdened mind of my maternal relative. Dick's cut—a slight scratch on the wrist, nearly hidden from view by a coating of tears and maple sugar—was speedily dressed, and what consolation the sufferer needed in addition to the sugar was duly administered. I peeped into the bedroom, but found father quietly sleeping, and mother was furnishing the desired "somebody to fit to" to the deprived dressmaker; so I went into the pantry and busied myself for the next hour in preparing the wherewith to replenish the bare cupboards. I baked pies, fried doughnuts, made tarts, and baked a plum cake large enough to furnish an army of giants. The chimney roared as if it were in anticipation of Thanksgiving day, the kitchen was scented like an Indian spice garden, and the fire burned in a delighted, determined way, as if it had a more than ordinary interest in the good things it was cooking to such a lovely brown. Mother, tearing herself a moment from the bondage of the dressmaker, relieved her soul with a satisfied sigh.

"Miss Crafts says she knows a beautiful way to make your new blue merino," said she, with an air of penitence, at the same time tasting one of my light golden-coated doughnuts.

But just then, for a wonder, I was not particularly exercised about my new blue merino; and as it was still on the shelves

of some Dalton store, and so, by no means, ready for Miss Crafts's beautiful pattern, I could not affect any enthusiasm.

"If your pies, and cakes, and tarts are as good as these doughnuts," she began again, "Mrs. Perkins won't be so likely to turn up her nose at them, though all his folks think that nobody but themselves can cook anything fit to eat, and Mrs. Perkins is more conceited than any of them. What I suffered from that woman when I was first married is not to be lightly told!"

"I wanted to ask you whether you'd have your trimmings cut bias or straight-way, Mrs. Curtis," said Miss Crafts, appearing in the door; and away went mother again, leaving me to proceed still further in my efforts to bring the world to its feet, and battle Dick's efforts to keep it still struggling upside down. His wrist pained him so that he needed entertainment to keep his mind off his troubles, and to that end, he stood on his head in my nicely buttered baking-pan, just ready for the cake, and was pulling out bits of the delicate dough with which to make mittens for the cat. Whereupon I boxed his ears, and he went into the sitting-room with such pain in his wound that mother feared mortification, and was anxious to send for old Dr. Stevens.

I enjoyed being left alone with my own thoughts that day, for they were very happy ones, and I could work now as well as I had dreamed, to the tune of them. I was young and foolish, you see, and had only known since last night that Reuben loved me. To be sure, I had a little idea that he liked me better than he did any other girl, because he always came home from church with me, and from spelling-school, though Hitty Wright, the squire's only daughter, who had been to boarding-school in the city because the village academy wasn't fine enough for her, shook her curls at him, and called him *Mr. Haddam* in her most fascinating lisp. Then of late he had been at our house three or four times in a week, and I had supposed it was to see me, though he always asked for father, when he knew he was sick in bed all the time.

"Why, you know father couldn't get up and see you when he was sick abed. Mother says you come to see Phebe!" remarked Dick, pleasantly, to him, when he came last night; and Reuben's face was as red as mine, for Miss Crafts was there, and Mrs. Stevens, as well as mother herself.

They all laughed as if they thought it cunning, but I *do* believe if only Reuben had been there, I should have boxed his ears soundly on the spot. Mother says Reuben is dreadfully bashful, and I suppose he is, though he isn't clumsy and awkward over it, like Sam Davis. But when he has been alone with me sometimes, he has blushed and stammered dreadfully, as if he wished to say something important, but couldn't for the life of him get it out. I couldn't think what it was then, but I had a suspicion now, for last night he left a little note in my hand when he left me, asking me to be his wife. He said that he had loved me a long time, but couldn't make up his mind to tell me so from want of courage; and enclosed in the note was a beautiful pearl ring, which had belonged to his mother, and which, if I returned his love, I was to wear when he came to-morrow night—that was to-night. If it was not on my finger, he should know that it was all over between us.

I could hardly sleep all night, my head was in such a happy tumult, though I said yes in my mind, as soon as I read his question; and the course of our true love was likely to run smoothly enough, for father and mother both set great store by Reuben, and he had no relatives whose interference would affect us in any way. Mother didn't think very much of his aunt Miss Debby Haddam, because she said that the butter that came from our house always had streaks of buttermilk in it, and was a perfect old gossip besides. And Miss Debby didn't think much of me, because I didn't do all the extra work in haytime. She said we would all go to rack and ruin, hiring a servant-girl was so expensive, and I had just enough learning to make me hoity-toity and good-for-nothing. You see I had been one year to the academy, and she thought we couldn't afford to spend our money in that way. I had heard that she said Reuben had too much sense to think of marrying a silly chit like me, and if he *did* do such a thing, he'd have

none of her property; she'd leave the old place to the town before she'd have one of the Curtises wasting what she'd slaved so for! But Reuben was well enough off without the "old place," as he had the finest farm in Waterford county of his own, and bank stock besides, which was left him by his mother; and it seemed that she had been unable to influence him against me, after all.

By four o'clock the cakes and pies were out of the oven, the gooseberry tarts, made with an especial thought for the taste of Uncle Isaiah, were filled to the top of their flaky rims; one of mother's best company tablecloths was brought from the great chest up stairs; the preserves were poured from their sealed jars into glasses as clear as their own juice, and everything looked nice enough to set mother's mind at ease, even with regard to the critical eye of Aunt Perkins. But I had worked pretty hard to bring about so much in so short a space of time, and the great three-seated wagon drove up to the door, bearing the expected company, while I was filling the last tart. Dick was at the fore before I had time to seize and extricate him from his coat of tears and sugar, and Aunt Perkins saw me with my sleeves rolled up, and in a dark calico gown, at that time of day; so mother's sunshine was dampened by a cloud at this early hour.

"Sakes alive! you don't say that poor John's laid up with the rheumatism again?" said grandmother, all the happiness of meeting gone from her dear good-natured old face. "Selina," turning to Aunt Perkins, "we had better go straight over to Ethan's, and make our visit there first. Sally and Phebe must have their hands full, without taking care of company."

"Just as you say, mother. I suppose Sarah does feel the exertion of taking care of John. Rheumatic people require much attention," said my aunt, with the little pucker which mother called politeness.

"Not to-night. I'm going to see John, and cheer him up a little!" said hearty Uncle Isaiah. "Here's little Phebe, she wont call it trouble to look after her old uncle's supper and breakfast. By the way, I heard that Phebe had a beau, Tom Haddam's son. There's no need of growing so red over it, my dear; his father's son could not help being a likely fellow; and to be

mistress of that Lynde farm is what nobody need to be ashamed of?"

"Rube Haddam is Phebe's beau," explained Dick. "He comes over here about every night, and squeezes Phebe's hand in the door. I see him. He gave her a ring?"

I gave that precocious youth a look which he understood, and fled up stairs to my own room.

How did Dick know that Reuben had given me a ring, I wondered? Had the little wretch been opening my drawer? He frequently ransacked my room when I was too busy to attend to him, but to-day I had only missed him during the time he was engaged in cutting his hand in the woodshed. But I had little room in my mind to give to vexation, for Reuben was coming to-night, and though the company might prevent my seeing him alone in the best room for one moment, it would be happiness enough to see him, anyway; and what an eloquent recognition of my answer his eyes would give when they fell upon his ring on my engagement finger! I could not help stopping in the midst of my hurried doing of my hair to look at that ring once more. It was so precious! But when I opened the box where I had stored it away so carefully, no ring was there! My heart gave a great jump of dismay. What could have become of it? There were no thieves about, I was sure. Dick, with all his audacity, would hardly have dared to touch it, and mother would not have taken it away without speaking to me. I must have put it somewhere else, though I could not remember doing so. But no; I turned every drawer upside down, I searched in every crack and crevice of the little room, I felt in my pockets, even under my pillow, but there was no ring to be found.

"Phebe!" called mother, at the foot of the stairs, "Phebe, it's time to make the tea; aren't you ever coming down?"

"In a moment," I answered, as quietly as possible under the circumstances. I was crying with fear and excitement, and there was my hair all unbraided, and my dress not yet changed.

The thought of Aunt Perkins came over me with a dreadful sinking of heart as I proceeded with my toilet.

"Phebe!" called mother again, before I was half through; and down I went without any cuffs on, and my hair fastened up any way with a comb. Mother looked

aghast when I appeared in that style, and Aunt Perkins puckered more than ever as her critical eyes ran over my apparel. But tea was over at last, the dishes washed and put away. Father was better, and sitting in a great chair by the fire, and the tea had brightened everybody up, so they were talking merrily. I stole away unnoticed to search for my ring again. Reuben would be there in less than half an hour, probably, and what should I do if I could not find it before that time? In the first place, I had a private interview with Dick, but he was all innocence, and declared that he had never touched the ring.

"How did you know that I had any ring?" I questioned, angrily.

"Coz I saw it on your finger. How could a fellow help knowing you had one?" he said, stoutly.

"But how did you know where I got it?" said I, suspiciously.

"That's telling!" said he, escaping into the other room with the most provoking grin he was capable of.

"Seems to me you're rather uneasy to-night, Phebe," said father. "Why don't you sit down and talk like other folks?"

So I sat down and tried to talk, but I kept thinking about the ring, of course, and answered grandma's questions at random, until mother looked at me as if she thought I were crazy. And so I was, pretty nearly. I wondered if I had worn the ring down stairs. I must have, else how could Dick have seen it on my finger? But still I was sure that when mother called me down at noon I took it off and put it away in my box. She startled me so from my dream, though, that I was not quite in the possession of my senses, and I had hardly recovered them for all day, what with my work and hurry. The ring was rather loose for my first finger, and I must have lost it off, if I *had* worn it down stairs. It was very strange, for how could I have worn it without being conscious of it, when it had been in my mind every moment?

At last Reuben came. I heard his step on the walk, and hastened to the door, hoping to be able to make some explanation, though my foolish heart was beating so that I could scarcely speak. But Dick was there before me, announcing in a loud voice that "Phebe was at home!"

He looked half confident half anxious when he came in, but when his eye fell

upon my bare hand, I could see a change in his face. Uncle Isaiah gave me sly merry glances, and talked to Reuben as if he were already one of the family. I could say nothing, and Reuben himself, though he seemed more than ever at his ease, was not inclined to talk much, and long before nine o'clock rose to take his leave. Now I should have a chance to speak, I thought, for Dick was deeply engaged in a gymnastic performance behind the scenes, and father and Uncle Isaiah were getting so lively over a political discussion, that everybody's attention was turned in that direction. The fates were against me, however, for who should appear on the steps just as we opened the door into the still moonlit night but Miss Hibbard, coming to make a call? So I could only say good-night to Reuben, who shook my hand in a strange sad way, as if it were a last farewell, and usher the lady into the sitting-room as politely as possible.

O, how much more sweetly I should have slept that night if I could only have said, "I have lost the ring, Reuben, else I should have worn it;" but then, he would have thought me strangely careless of his gift. As it was, I slept very little, but lay awake planning how I should send a note to Reuben. I would not send it through the post-office, because Mrs. Roberts the post-mistress knew my handwriting, and she was such a gossip! I would not go to Reuben's house myself, of course, and I could not send Dick, for nothing in the world would keep him silent on the subject. At last I concluded to go in search of Jimmy Taylor—a boy who did chores for us sometimes, and who was as trustworthy and faithful as the day is long. I would write a note, and give him directions to give it only into Reuben's hands. But, dear me! I didn't know the next day as ever I should get time to write that note. Father was a great deal worse; Aunt Perkins had the neuralgia in her head, and needed no end of care; another aunt came bag and baggage, to spend a week with us; mother, all worn out with sitting up all night to take care of father, was quite overwhelmed with trouble, and toward night Dick mysteriously disappeared, and the house was in a panic, I assure you, when nine o'clock came and he was still missing. Sam, our hired man, went one way and I went another in search of him. Somewhere in the

neighborhood of eleven o'clock I met him coming calmly up the road, but he was bareheaded, and in a fearfully dilapidated and dripping state. He had been over to see Tom Smith, a friend of his who lived five miles away. His friend entertained him by giving free instructions in a new gymnastic feat, which in some way led them into the middle of the goose-pond, I could not understand just how. I was exasperated to see mother kiss him and cry over him. For my part, I thought he deserved a good whipping, and I had a little private interview with him after I had washed some of the mud from his clothes and got him ready for bed.

The next day I was also in demand every moment. My hands were not free until late at night, and I cried myself to sleep when my head did reach the pillow at last.

Sam came in on the third morning with a piece of news. Reuben Haddam had let his farm to Uncle Ethan, and had dismissed his housekeeper, shut up his house, and gone away.

"Gone where?" I found strength to gasp.

"I don't know. Somewhere out West, I bleeve. Is'posed you knew," said he, in his bungling way.

Mother looked at me quite aghast, but I managed to go on with my work as usual, and for a wonder nobody asked me any questions on the subject. Father was so sick that he neither thought nor cared anything about it, and mother was so busy and worried that it slipped her mind also, I suppose.

Two more wretched days passed, and on Saturday afternoon Aunt Perkins suddenly grew better, and was seized with a desire to drive over to Uncle Ethan's, and Dick and I must carry her there at once in the wagon.

"Debby wont be expecting her," said my mother to me in private, as we were preparing to start, "and she's never prepared for company, and she'll be in a dreadful stew if she isn't now, for she's as much afraid of that woman as I am. Supposing you carry over that loaf of cake we baked this morning, and some of those gooseberry tarts you made the other day. You baked so many of them that they'll get stale and dry before they're all eaten."

So I packed up the eatables, and Aunt

Debby was glad enough of them, for she was an ailing, inefficient little woman, and, as mother said, never was prepared for company.

"You and Dick must stay to tea," said she, patting me on the shoulder; "and by the way, Phebe, Reuben Haddam is here. He's going to spend Sunday with us, and is going to start for Chicago bright and early Monday morning. What makes you let him go away, child? I was so surprised when he came and told your uncle he could have the farm if he liked, because he was going to leave town! Your uncle was too glad to get it, though, to ask many questions. He's been coaxing him to let half of it for a good while. It joins ours, you know, and ours is all run out, and not half large enough for Ethan's notions."

My heart leaped for joy at the thought of seeing Reuben once more, but I said nothing, and Dick, for a wonder, behaved like an angel, and made no remarks concerning that gentleman. I was dreadfully nervous, though, and when Reuben's surprised eyes met mine, as he came in to the supper-table, I blushed until my very ears tingled, and I was afraid tears would drop into my plate. He noticed my confusion, I know, but he was as cool and calm as possible, called me Miss Curtis, and was wonderfully polite. He sat directly opposite me, and I am sure I didn't know whether I was eating or not, nor did I heed what any one was saying. I only thought of Reuben—that Reuben was going away, and I must get a chance to speak to him. He didn't seem to care much that I didn't wear his ring, though!

Reuben was eating one of my gooseberry tarts, when all of a sudden he looked embarrassed, and his teeth came in contact with some hard substance that sounded like metal. O dear, I thought, what had got into my tarts? I thought I made them so nice! That wicked Dick must have dropped a piece of coal or something of the kind in them; and Aunt Debby would be so mortified! He was taking something out of his mouth, but I dared not look up until Dick screamed out:

"Only see, Phebe, there's your ring that Reuben gave you, and you made such a time about losing. It got into the tart some way when you were filling it. I guess you dropped it into the jam-pot!" And he roared with laughter, as if he thought

it were a great joke. Aunt Perkins looked horrified, Aunt Debby mystified, and Uncle Ethan laughed, and wanted to know what it was all about.

Reuben made him some answer, I didn't hear what, and then, to my relief, somebody called for Aunt Debby, and we all rose from the table. Nobody but Dick had seen the ring, they had only heard what he said, and he was such a rattlehead that they seemed to forget his announcement afterwards.

"Reuben," said I, never heeding Dick, who would not take himself away, "I have something to tell you before you go. You will come and see me, wont you?"

"Why not tell me now, Phebe?" said he, brightening. I looked toward the other end of the room where sat Aunt Perkins watching us and puckering dreadfully.

"Why can't we go and take a little walk? It is a beautiful sunset. Wont your aunt excuse you?"

She did excuse me, and I didn't mind her meaning smiles very much. So we went to walk over the rosy spring fields, and everything was explained. Reuben said that the world was beginning to look bright again, though he never expected it would do so; and I said that I had never expected it would, either, for I thought he had gone away, and I should never see him again.

Reuben did not go to Chicago, for Uncle Ethan released him from his bargain in letting the farm; but when the roses began to peep out in the frontyard, and the honeysuckles to blossom over the great old-fashioned windows, I took possession of the farmhouse myself as Reuben's wife, and the sun never shone on a happier bride or bridegroom, I do believe. I wear the pearl ring which caused me so much trouble to this day, but the question as to how it came in the tart is still unsettled. I think Dick must have had something to do with it, though he always declares that he did not; but Reuben thinks that I myself must have lost it off my finger into the jam, and has had a piece taken out of it to prevent another such catastrophe. Still, I can't think that I wore the ring out of my own room, and mother says that she did not see it on my finger. However it was, an engagement ring is rather a novel spice for gooseberry tarts, and my children and grandchildren never tire of the story.

## GRACIE.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

"WHERE did I find her, Ned? Well, you see I had been to Somerville on business for the firm, and the man I should have seen, I didn't see; he'd gone—well, no matter where, as that has nothing to do with my story.

"Well, they kept getting in, and in, till long before we reached Fremont Street, that horsecar was just crowded, jammed full, and I do believe I was squeezed in the smallest possible space for a fellow of my dimensions.

"Hurry, will I? O, of course. But you see, Ned, this chapter of my life is well worthy of a lengthy introduction; however, I'll spare your feelings all I can, old fellow. See, where was I? O yes, the horsecar was full. Well, you know, Ned, I used to patronize the perfumer considerably—got one spell to be really fond of musk, heliotrope, patchouly, etc., and didn't feel in trim without some smell. Bah! I despise myself for it now. Couldn't be persuaded to scatter any of the stuff now. Pardon—I perceive you still favor it. But to fully appreciate it, you should have been in that horsecar, Ned. O the confusion, the agony of smell! May I never enjoy it more! I felt bad-tempered that day, I'm willing to own; had the toothache, or some such comforting thing. Of course you know there was some cause for ill-temper in your most amiable servant; and, as is usual at such times, everything had gone wrong all day, from the time when I tried to put my new style collar on my neck upper side down, and turning angrily, struck my foot a most unmerciful whack against the bureau, hitting a sensitive toe. Then the steak was tough and the coffee muddy, and everything went wrong in business that memorable day; but mind you, Ned, those are just the days when what afterwards proves to be my streaks of luck usually tuck themselves in somewhere.

"But to go back to that blessed horsecar. They kept getting in and out, mostly ladies—it was a pleasant day, and the fall styles were just opening; I'm well posted in all such matters now—and all the women were on the alert. I had the exquis-

ite pleasure of upholding tasteful, voluminous drapery of nearly every hue and texture, till my eyes really wearied of the brilliant display, and leaning my aching head back, I closed my eyes wearily for a moment, perhaps, to shut out the flutter around me. But suddenly an intangible something, an exquisite thrill touched my soul, as—didn't I know I was a spiritualist? Well, I am, as far as that goes. A soft voice murmured, 'Thank you!' and another bit of drapery fell across my hand as it rested upon my knee. I opened my eyes quickly, and there sat my fate. Not a very formidable one, I own, but something softly sweet, soothing and delicate; just such a form and face as I fancied should accord with that sweet tender voice. At the start I gave she turned slightly, and gave me a shy glance out of those deep soul-thrilling eyes; but they drooped instantly, and a soft flush dyed the transparent fairness of the changeful face beneath what I realize now was far too ardent a gaze. I had wearied, I said, of the continual flutter of simpering affected ladies around me. It is ungallant to say so, I know, but then you are aware that I never was celebrated for gallantry, though you must admit I am frank; and I will go further, and ask, as I have asked of myself several times, why it is that many ladies seem to think they must change entirely in appearance the moment they come in our presence? for certainly many of them do; and I do sincerely hope that was the case with the ladies that day, for I should be sorry to believe they were as soft as they appeared.

"But here was a most delightful change. Every movement was as simple and unaffected as a child's—and then there was such a restful, soothing power in her presence to me, that the peevish irritability of the morning vanished beneath it as an ill-favored dream. Laugh at it if you will, Ned, but I tell you there is more in these indefinable influences than you are willing to admit, or than the most of us realize. Why, I did not for a moment wonder at Brown's altered appearance after I saw that wife of his. I tell you, Ned, that

woman's voice would rasp me to death; and think of poor little Brown having to endure it! Why, you can hear that voice the whole square, I know; and then her ways—coarse is no name for them! However that little mild fellow came to take her, I don't see. But there! she took him, in one sense of the word; that overbearing soul was too much for Brown—magnetism, and all that sort of thing, you see.

"There sat my divinity. I realized it then—I, who have always laughed at, despised love's pranks, and thought my heart invulnerable to all womankind except my mother and good sister Annie, felt myself yielding, foolishly, as I should have called it in others, to this sweet influence, the soul-captivating power of an unknown woman, whose name even I did not know; never had even seen her face before, for I know if I had, I should have remembered it.

"Smile, Ned; it is rather a foolish, extravagant rhapsody for a fellow of thirty, I know; but—well, I feel it, that's all. And there I sat the few minutes remaining of the ride, in a delicious thralldom, rid of nearly a sense of suffocation from a variety of sweet scents, by the exit of the butterflies of fashion (I use that term with due regard to dress and all), ready, as it were, to kiss the soft delicate drapery resting lightly as a snowflake upon my hand, blessing this near presence and the absence of perfumery, for my sweet rose was scentless, yet sweetly fragrant. All too soon Fremont Street was reached, and reluctantly I rose. Then I was guilty of a thoughtless action which I regretted the moment it was done; the lifting of my hat, a deferential, I had almost said reverential, bow to that, then, stranger to me; for the sweet face grew scarlet at that glance, and the clear truthful eyes drooped painfully, and the full scarlet lips quivered tremulously. That much, and a keen realization that I had been a fool, a contemptible fool, and I was jostled by the crowd, and brought to my sober senses to ask myself what did it matter, as it wasn't at all likely I should ever see that sad sweet face again in my life; and at the thought I fairly stood still with an overwhelming sense of loss, such as I never had experienced before, and know I never shall again. Why, I tell you, old fellow, I felt as if more than one-half of me were gone.

"I called myself a fool over and over again, with nearly every breath, but all to no avail; I was possessed, haunted, sleeping or waking, by that, to me, loveliest of faces. Thus I passed three most miserable days; and well I remember the succeeding evening, drizzly, dark and uncomfortable, when the demon of restlessness, as I termed it then (I now call it by a different name, however), so possessed me that I could not content myself with a prime cigar and a quiet evening with my books, though I was so morose that I was disinclined to any society but my own moody thoughts. Finally, throwing my cigar away half smoked, I stalked out into the mud and drizzle. I walked on aimlessly for some time through several streets, unmindful of where I went, indulging my moody thoughts, when suddenly my senses became alert at the sound of a voice that I never had heard but once, but which I felt must be ever remembered as the sweetest music of my life.

"Ah, well—I do not wonder that you laugh at such gushing words from me, who have ever laughed myself at all such foolishness, and sneered at all affection except that which should come through years of acquaintance by the safe road of respect and worldly wisdom; now I felt that I had yielded blindly, like a silly schoolboy, yet I would have staked my all in this world, and I had almost said hereafter, upon the sweet purity of that soul.

"'I can't! O I can't! Anything but that, dear Will,' the sad low voice wailed pitifully.

"'Dear Will?' Why, Ned, my heart bounded fiercely, and my blood coursed like liquid fire through my veins, at the endearing term bestowed on another by those sweet lips. You see, Ned, I was past cure. But fiercer still grew my feelings—ah, who shall describe them!—as a surly masculine voice replied to that pitiful pleading, roughly, harshly:

"'We'll see, miss! Of course you'll go. Did you ever, now I ask you, did you ever know Will Carson to give up or fail in anything he had set his heart on?'

"A weary sigh, which pierced my very heart, was the only answer she gave, and he continued:

"'And my heart is set upon this, and—I tell you you *will* go there, you will do as I bid you, Grace Alden; for what else, save



my own benefit, should I have spent so much money on you, I should like to know? What do you think you are, a queen or a duchess, that you must be wooed and won in right regal style? Come on, I say; no lagging, for I told Hart Greenleaf you should be there to-night, and you shall. To think of his stooping to such a nameless poor chit as you are, and then to get the cold shoulder as he has! Why, any girl in the city would be proud of his attentions. And the presents he has sent you are worth a fortune of themselves! By the way, have you got those pearls on, Grace? He wished you to wear them to-night as a token of better feeling towards the donor.'

"She did not reply, and he asked, in a voice so harsh I could seem to see how the fair face paled and quivered, feel just how the gentle timid heart quailed and fluttered:

"Grace Alden, have you, tell me if you have got those pearls on, at once?"

"O, I couldn't wear them, indeed I couldn't, and be so deceitful! And then—and then I—I hate him so I cannot put on anything he sends, or that I know his hands have touched. O don't! don't! You hurt my arm so!" the sad voice cried.

"I could bear no more. Could you expect me to, Ned? I am not a violent man, but in an instant that fellow lay at my feet, and in the next I had drawn trembling little Gracie's hand through my arm, and led her a few steps away; and then we came beneath a gaslight, and I released the little hand which struggled like a timid bird in my arm's firm hold, and said:

"Don't be afraid. I will not harm you. I only wish to protect you, I assure you."

"She glanced timidly up in my face, gave a little start, and 'O' she exclaimed, involuntarily. Somehow that glance, in which I saw that the lovely face gained assurance, and the tone of that exclamation, which, with surprise seemed also to breathe confidence, and I had almost said pleasure, gave me hope. I scarcely know how to tell it, Ned, for who can define the sweet magic subtlety, the susceptible telegraphy of the soul, so unexplainable, indefinable, yet the very essence, the sweet elixir of life?"

"But the momentary bliss, the thought that she was not sorry to see me, was in a moment dispelled, as she said, plaintively:

"O, why did you do it? Let me go back, sir! He has done so much for me, I must go where he says! O take me back to him!"

"Indeed, he has no right to make, to compel you to go where you do not wish to go, and I must insist upon taking you to your home now."

"O no, no sir! you are very kind, but I must return to him, indeed I must!" she said, pleadingly, turning away from me.

"But he is unkind, rude to you," I remonstrated.

"No, he has been kind to me, done so much for me all these years, that he has a right to expect me to do as he wishes; but it is so hard, so hard to me!" she concluded, in a grieved way, as if talking to herself.

"Then I would not do it. He should not ask or expect you to do things so distasteful to you, and I would not do it if he is ungenerous enough to ask it," I replied, as I hurried along to keep beside her, as she nearly ran.

"But I must, I really must! Why, you don't know—O where is he?" she cried out, as we reached and passed some distance beyond the place where I had so unceremoniously silenced him, and he was nowhere to be seen.

"I gave her some comforting assurance that we should soon come up with him, the while my heart rebelled fiercely against yielding her to his unscrupulous care again. You see I knew this Hart Greenleaf well by reputation as an unprincipled villain, a gambler and *roue*, who was spending the vast property left him by his respectable father in a most abominable profligate manner, and this sweet little girl was selected for another victim to his satanic wiles. I tried very hard to truly sympathize with her in her tearful regrets, when, after searching a long time for him, we were obliged to give up the vain search; but I was really glad—I could not bring myself to feel willing to relinquish her to him.

"I then told her I would accompany her to her home, to which she objected, but finally consented when I assured her I could not leave her in that unprotected manner. Her home was in a quiet, most respectable part of the city.

"Did her parents reside there? I ventured to gratify my eager curiosity enough

to ask, wished, if possible, to learn what claims this rude man had upon her, and why she felt obliged to obey him against her inclinations.

"Her parents died years ago, she told me. She boarded here; they were very nice people, and kind to her. Her cousin Will was her guardian. He had done so much for her, and now—and then she began to cry again.

"I soothed her as well as I could, the supposition that she would probably find him in the house awaiting her, or he would speedily return, thinking she had gone directly to her home, seeming to be the most consoling thought to her.

"Reluctantly I bade her good-night, dreading to leave her there, and without an invitation to call (which I did hope to receive), I turned slowly homeward.

"Three months passed by, bringing a most important change to our firm. Mr. Searles, the senior, died suddenly of heart disease, and his son-in-law, Mr. Elliott, who had only delayed the most earnest desire of his heart to go to Cincinnati for a year past, that his wife, an only child, might be near her fond father, now determined to go and reside near his own family.

"So, after the settlement of the deceased member's estate, and necessary arrangements for the transfer of Mr. Elliott's interest to me, I was to be the only one left in the old office, where I had been the junior for years.

"Finally the business was nearly settled satisfactorily, and for a month past Mr. Elliott had taken no active interest at the office.

"I sat alone one evening, moody and thoughtful. All through that day my thoughts would wander from the business in which I was engaged to the one who had awakened such a deep interest in my heart. My love, for thus I had already named it, was no fleeting schoolboy fancy. If I never saw little Gracie again, I felt that I could not, did not wish to forget her. Female faces had gained a new interest to me. I peered curiously at every closely-drawn veil, hoping to recognize that sweet face, yet was daily disappointed, hoping vainly. But all the while I fretted discontentedly, kind fate was working for me. Suddenly, without the usual intimation of steps on the stairs, there was a

timid rap upon the door. 'Come in,' I called, loudly, and an old feeble-looking woman entered, and looking nervously around, she came close to me, and in a whisper asked:

"'Are you alone, Mr. Bennett? You are Mr. Bennett?'

"I assured her that was my name, and also that I, or rather we were quite by ourselves.

"'But I thought he followed me, sir, and I went up the other flight of stairs, a tiresome way for my old feet, and waited ever so long at the dressmaker's door above, till he should think I had gone in there—he's jest as watchful as a cat, and sly as a fox, that's what he is, sir!' And she peered cautiously around the room, then opened the door a little ways and looked, drawing a deep sigh of relief when she found there was no one outside.

"I began to think the old lady was rather unsettled in her mind, she acted so queerly, when she began to talk again by saying:

"'You see I don't know what to do, sir. It's a most trying place for an ignorant old woman like me, for I dare not fetch the law on to me, and I can't live to have things as they are now; so I must come to somebody to tell me what I can do.'

"'If I can help you, I will,' I answered.

"'So Mrs. Elliott told me, sir. She sent me to you, as her husband is away; I told her I was in trouble, not knowing what to do. I've been doing a little work for her,' she said, slowly, looking down, thoughtfully.

"Again I urged her to sit down and tell me what troubled her. But she did not offer to take the chair I set for her, looking wistfully toward the inner room, and I said:

"'Come in here, if you would rather.'

"'It would seem safer to me, sir,' she answered, smiling. And hastening to the other room, she sat down quickly, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously a moment, and then she said, hurriedly:

"'She's been shut up, poor child, these four days now, sir, and he a threatening with everything that is bad, sir, even to telling her he'll send her to the asylum, as she has a great 'orror of, sir; as seeing her poor uncle as was shut up in one being so violent that he must have had a hard time of it, for when the poor soul was fetched home to be buried, I tell you 'twas awful

to see the blue marks round his shrunken wrists. An' to scare her, to make her do as he wants her to, he tells the poor child that he can easily prove that insanity runs in the family, an' make 'em believe that she is crazy; an', sir, I don't know but he could, as she is really a most crazy with his cruel aggravating treatment.' And for want of breath the old lady ceased her hurried talk, and I asked, wishing to come at the main facts of the case as soon as possible:

"What did he shut her up for?"

"'Tis all about that man, sir, as has taken a liking to her; an' no wonder at that at all, sir, as who wouldn't? A sweeter creature never lived; but she's too timid, sir, an' gives in to him as is an evil, wicked man. Ah me! it do seem he's an awful influence like over her, for she's that afraid of him she trembles all over, sir, if he gives her a cross look or a harsh word. I can't make it out at all, sir!"

"Who is this man he's troubling her about now?" I asked, growing a little impatient, I must own.

"His name is Greenleaf—Iem—me see—Hart Greenleaf, he calls him,' she replied.

"At that name my heart quickened, and the queer case gained additional interest.

"And her name?" I asked, quickly.

"Poor little Gracie!" she moaned. "And she a trusting him still, when I know he's cheated and wronged her so! He making her believe that she's got nothing, is all dependent on him! I know her mother left her thousands, for didn't the poor dear lady tell me, her nurse, so at the very last? feeling easy about her dear child for that, and leaving her in his care, she trusting him so, too.

"An' he is either keeping it all, or else he's gone an' wasted it all—for I think he gambles, sir, that I do, as knowing myself that he goes to such places often, and a keeping bad company, too, sir.

"An' a bad man this other one is too, sir, not fit to look toward my sweet, good little girl—going often to such places, sir—a bad man he is, surely, if he can make fine presents, and talk so smooth."

"And again the voluble old lady stopped for want of breath, and sitting down beside her, I sought by questioning to learn all I could about this case, now intensely interesting to me.

"For a little while all I gained by ear-

nest inquiries was rather disconnected, almost unintelligible ejaculations; but by putting this and that together, I was enabled to come at the main facts of the case, which promised by that imperfect information to be quite a complicated one, aside from my personal interest in the affair.

"Little Gracie Alden's father, a wealthy Englishman, came, it seemed, to America when she was about a year old. His wife, a very beautiful lady, was an American by birth, and exceedingly desirous of visiting relatives in this country, and chiefly to gratify her, he had crossed the water, but once here, he had, it appeared, no desire to return to England; and all were happy and contented, till in an unlucky hour he entered largely into speculation, which, ending unfortunately, robbed him of the greater part of his property; and being rather easily discouraged, misfortunes had a bad effect upon him. He became, from a social agreeable man, morose, sad and greatly depressed. This change had a serious effect upon his health; in less than two years from that time he died of melancholy and consumption. But his wife, a year previous to his decease, had a legacy of nearly fifty thousand dollars left to her by the death of her grandfather. This, the old lady, who it seemed was little Gracie's nurse, had crossed the water with them, and was devotedly attached to all of the family, said she knew was certainly so, for she heard Mrs. Alden speak of it many times after the old gentleman's funeral, when striving in every way to encourage her husband, to rouse him from the depressed state into which he had fallen, assuring him that he need not fear want for his loved ones any longer; and she had lamented many times to her that even this did not enliven, had no effect upon him. The wife, who, it appeared, was most devotedly attached to her husband, died in less than a year after her husband's death. This Mr. Carson had been a frequent visitor in the family since their arrival in America. He was a cousin to Mrs. Alden, and after her husband's death he had become most assiduous in kindly offers, had relieved her of all care, striving in every possible way to divert her mind, and comfort her in her great affliction. And she, as was quite natural, came to have great confidence in the scheming man. Just be-

fore her death she told the faithful nurse what a comfort it was to her in this trying hour of separation from her loved ones to feel that there was one with whom she could safely trust them; that she had made all needful arrangements for her darling little Gracie's future; her cousin, who had become her guardian, had tearfully assured her that he would tenderly care for her as he would for an own child; that her welfare in every way should become his dearest pleasure; and further, that she should not be separated from her old nurse, to whom the child was, it seemed, fondly attached; that she had made ample provision for her support also. 'And, sir,' she concluded, 'what do you think he did when my poor lady died? Why, in ever so little a while after it, he just took the poor dear right away from me as loved her so, an' put her all among strangers to school; an' when I travelled many a mile just for a look at my sweet darling's face, the proud stern lady who kept the school just told me crossly, stiffly, that the little girl was left in her care, with the strict charge that she was to be seen by no visitors except her guardian, or any one who might accompany him; and then, sir, I knew, I felt that that evil man meant some mischief. You see he took her away when he had got rid of me by sending me of an errand to fetch a few toys for the dear child; and when I came back, what did the maid tell me but he'd taken her away off to school, without even a kiss or a goodbye from her old nurse? And when he came back the next day he said he did it to spare himself what he called "a scene," and said as now the child was gone, of course I wouldn't be needed any more; and he paid me just like he would any servant and sent me away. When I ventured to speak of what Gracie's mother had told me, why, he only laughed in my face, and called me "a poor demented creature," and told me to give him no further trouble. Well, sir, so it has gone on for years, with him a doing for her, and making her believe that she's wholly dependent on him; and such is the power he's got with her, you, nor I, nor nobody else could make her believe but it's just as he says. I didn't see my darling child for years, but I kept near him, hoping I would at last get a sight of her. And one day when I came home from my work, what did I find but this

same Mr. Carson a waiting in my little room for me? And he spoke to me, sir, just as if he'd seen me but the day before, and he told me little Gracie was very sick, and he wanted me to come and take care of her, to get her well. That, sir, was six months ago. Well, Gracie got well. All through it he was tender and kind to her, but I knew there was some worriment on her mind, and watching him, I was afraid he meant to—wanted to marry her himself. But when she got strong again, and I thought he'd be sending me away, he told me I'd better stay with Gracie, as she wished me to, "and mind," said he, "to keep your foolishness to yourself, or 'twill be the worse for you." Then, sir, I began to think again all about the wrong he'd done us both, and when he come to pester her so about this other evil man, I felt I must try to help my darling some way.'

"Here the old lady stopped, fairly panting from excitement and her hurried talking. I sat a moment in perplexed thought, and the woman began to cry again.

"'Well, now, we must see what we can do to help your little Gracie, to free her from the power of this bad man,' I said, my voice lingering upon the sweet name, now so dear to me, and my heart moved deeply at the recital of her wrongs and the old lady's vehement grief.

"'O sir, can we—can you do anything to help my poor darling? *How* can we take her away from him? And she—ah! she believes she must, that she ought to do just everything he tells her to, and that he has done all he pretends to have done for her. Why, no one could make her believe that he has cheated her so, he's such a power over her. And I—I daren't tell her all I know, for—I—I'm afraid of him, sir,' she said, slowly, in a timid faltering voice, glancing uneasily at the door; then starting quickly in her chair as I was about to speak, she held up her shrunken hand, whispering:

"'Hush! I surely thought I heard some one. I feel as if he was near.'

"I began to think the poor old lady was slightly demented, as she rose feebly and crept stealthily to the door. I followed after her, looking out as she peered curiously down the stairs, but saw nothing; then cautiously closing the door, she returned to the inner room. I began to feel an intense curiosity to see this wonderful

man. Then I asked her if I should go with her to Gracie, and let us do what we could to comfort her as soon as possible. But she started up wildly, as my heart began to quicken its pulsations at the bare hope of seeing my love, and cried out:

"O no, no sir! It never'll do for you to go there! Why, he'd be awful, and she'd be frightened nearly to death! And then, sir, you see she don't know I've come here at all; but I couldn't bear it any longer, and—can't you tell me, sir, what I can do, and you not let 'em know that I've been here? She's so timid, sir, she'd give right up to him, and not say but he'd treated her well. And he's so jealous like, I think he'd kill you, sir, if you went there."

"I uttered an impatient exclamation, wondering what any one could do in such a case, and the old lady wrung her hands nervously, wailing:

"O, I'm afraid any one can't do anything at all, sir!"

"I sat down beside her, entreating her to be calm, and in a few words as possible I stated the case as viewed legally, and showed her how impossible, under the circumstances, as she represented them, it would be to do anything for Gracie if, as she thought, she would not even dare to admit harsh, unjust treatment, or make any complaints herself. And then there was no one to prove that Gracie's mother had really left the provision for her child and nurse that the aged nurse claimed she had left. Gracie was but six years of age when her mother died, and she was confided to the care of this man, in whom, it seemed, she had entire confidence. Of course this scheming man could easily set at defiance all evidence given by this feeble old woman; and recalling Gracie's strange manner that evening when I had interfered, I felt the force of what the old lady had said. I then told her there seemed to be no direct way in which to aid her unless she should tell Gracie plainly what her mother had told her, how she believed she had been cheated and wronged, and urge her to resist such treatment; and further, I thought she had better tell her she had been to see me, and that I would aid her in every way in my power to escape from the clutches of this evil man. Then I thought that I would like to make some direct communication to Gracie, and that possibly, if she knew to just whom her old

nurse had, not knowing, applied, perhaps it might help to strengthen her to cast off this subtle influence, this slavish obedience, for—well, you see, I had all the confidence and vanity of a man fondly in love, and I liked to fancy that little Gracie was not wholly indifferent to me, that she had thought of the gallant, interesting stranger occasionally, and also flattered myself that I might have more influence with her than others. So I wrote upon the impulse of the moment a dainty little note, worded as cautiously as blind love would allow, signing my name with a most graceful flourish.

"At first the old lady was aghast at the bold proceeding, but finally I persuaded her to take it, telling her she need not give it to Gracie at once, but persuade her in every way possible to her views, and then, when she thought she might venture, she could tell her she'd been to me, and give her the note. Well, after much cautioning and earnest advice, the old lady nervously departed, and I fell at once to weaving a bit of romance, in which Gracie and I were to be the principal actors, with all the celerity and enthusiasm of a sentimental schoolboy. Verily, Ned, what fools love will make of us! I forgive you that smile, old fellow. Alas, for the falsity of human hopes! That dainty note that Gracie was to kiss and dream over gave me this ugly scar just under my left ear. But then, steel and gunpowder are often the exciting concomitants of a bit of romance. Whether the old lady had heard any one or not, she was followed to my office and home again; and as soon as she entered the hall a heavy hand was laid upon her trembling shoulder, and she was subjected to a stern catechizing, which she dared not evade. And when she tremulously drew her handkerchief from her pocket, my dainty note fell at his feet. He seized it, and ere she had wiped the tears from her eyes, he had opened and was reading it.

"Three days passed, during which I neither saw nor heard in any way from Gracie or the old nurse. I need not tell you, Ned, that during those three days of anxious suspense I was scarcely able to keep my mind upon business which should have engrossed my undivided attention, and I knew then as well as I do now, that I should lose the case which I could easily have won, and that I was really the fool Elliott called me that morning; telling me

in his badgering way that if I couldn't sustain the credit of the old office better than that I'd better shut up at once and open elsewhere, or not at all.

"Why, man, I should think you in love if you weren't that sort of a fellow, for you look and talk just about as stupidly as one in that foolish way," he added.

"I flushed at this apt thrust, and laughing in my face assuredly, he turned from me, looking back at the door to say:

"Don't forget old true friends, for I wouldn't miss of that cake, you know."

"The evening of the third day, a dark moonless night, I sat in the office alone, writing hurriedly, striving to make up a little for lost time, when the door opened cautiously, and a man entered. You know, Ned, I am very decided in my preferences or antipathies, and that if I do not like a person I can scarcely be civil; hoggish, I believe you used to call me. Well, at the first glimpse of his face, the first sound of his voice, I was repelled. I wanted to tell him to clear out.

"The visitor walked across the office twice, in an aimless way, after bidding me 'good-evening,' looking furtively, quizzically at me as he passed where I sat, waiting for him to make his business known. I couldn't bear it any longer, and I said, rather gruffly, I fear:

"You wished to see me, sir?"

"He laughed contemptuously, and then replied in a most aggravating way:

"For what else should I come here, Mr. Bennett? That's your name, I believe, isn't it?"

"I nodded stiffly, and smiling coolly at me, he muttered:

"Ah, yes! I have your address, you see—not exactly your card, but a very dainty little note, sir. Now, I shouldn't wonder if you'd be full as good at love-making as you are at pleading; but let me tell you, sir," and his voice, which had been gradually rising, now became loud and stern in enunciation, "that you'll lose this case just as surely as you lost that one the other day. Bah! I could plead better than that myself, without any pretence to a profession."

"I knew now just where I had heard that sneering, harsh voice before, which touched a chord of remembrance, but I was unable to place it until it gained that same pitch, and vividly recalled that even-

ing when I had taken little Gracie from him. He sat looking at me scornfully as conflicting emotions struggled in my heart a moment, and then, laughing sneeringly again at my apparent emotion, setting his head at one side, in a leering manner he said:

"Do you know, my brilliant lawyer, my fine gentleman, that you are meddling with something that don't concern you in the least? Well, now, what do you think you are going to do, anyway? Perhaps you calculate to make love to this beautiful, interesting young lady, for that exquisite little note of yours does savor strongly of the tender passion. It needs but just a little more sweetening, a trifle more tender impressiveness, and you're all right. Now this is really almost lover-like." And he took the note from his pocket again, smoothed it out complacently, and read, in a tender caressing tone: "And believe me always sincerely and devotedly your friend." That last word should have been a little stronger," he murmured; "but there! as long as she didn't see it, and no one but my unappreciative self has read it, it doesn't matter. Sometime, in the pleasant future, when beautiful Gracie is my wife (for she is beautiful and sweet, and I fully appreciate your good taste), I'll read this dainty note to her, and we'll have a good laugh over it."

"Sir!" I cried out, indignantly, unable to bear any more, for I can stand anything under heaven better than ridicule, you know, Ned, and that man, why, I don't believe there's another living mortal whose manner could exasperate me as his did! It was with difficulty that I restrained myself from springing at him. "If you have any business with me, just make it known as soon as possible, for I've heard quite enough of this."

"Softly, my dear sir; I have business with you, and I've been making it known as fast as I choose ever since I came in." And he laughed in a chuckling way.

"And if that is your business, I shall hear no more of it," I replied, rising indignantly.

"But I choose that you shall, and I rather think you will, Mr. Bennett. So just sit down and keep cool, will you? Why, a lawyer should be able to control himself better than that; but love will make fools of the best of us, truly. Why,

I haven't been quite myself since Gracie's charms have expanded so gloriously,' he said, coolly.

"'I thought you were anxious to marry her to another scoundrel,' I said, moved by curiosity.

"'Thanks for the implied compliment; but please choose your words a little more cautiously, sir,' he replied, a sudden whiteness about his compressed sinister mouth. Then lightly he continued, 'So you thought I was going to give my sweet girl to Hart Greenleaf? No sir! I shall marry little Gracie myself when I get ready, if I live long enough; meanwhile, I've a sharp little game to play with my friend, and in beautiful Gracie I hold the winning card; and his being this time really in love makes it all the better for me. He's as big a fool as you are; and I tell you confidentially, if I were going to give her to either, I'd sooner let you have her; as I do think you're a little better fellow, if you are soft-headed. And then—well, I do think she's a little soft toward you. There's no accounting for the absurd taste of a sentimental girl.'

"'Please hasten a bit; I'm in a hurry,' I replied, stiffly.

"'Calmly, sir. Now I just want to say to you once for all, sir, that if you meddle in any shape or manner with my affairs, you'll—why, you'll regret it, that's all.'

"He rose as he said this, came close to me with his white teeth set hard together, and his thick black mustache bristling defiantly above them. One white, large, but shapely hand twisted in the mass of glossy, wavy black beard which fell far down over his scrupulously white shirt-front; the other hand, still holding that note, slipped confidently into an inner breast-pocket, raising slightly the tiny pistol resting there. You know, Ned, I'm not the fellow to be bullied by any one, and I think I met the glance of those restless flashing black eyes fearlessly, as I said:

"'I shall do as I please in this matter, or any other, sir.'

"'You will, eh? Just you see, then, that your pleasure accords with mine fully, my dear sir.' And he turned as if to leave. Then halting, he looked back at me, and said, 'Remember, sir, I have warned you, and if you now *dare* to interfere in any way, you must take the consequence of your absurd folly.'

"'Dare! I dare to do as I please, sir.'

"'Ah yes!' he murmured, laughing scornfully, as he closed the door softly.

"I didn't make up for much lost time after that interview. I had seen the man I so desired to see, and the impression made was far from satisfactory—did not inspire me with much confidence in my tender hopes. Yes, he was a handsome man, there was no gainsaying that; a dangerously handsome man. Those restless eyes of his were a mighty power of themselves—flashing, scintillating, changing entirely with every varying mood, charged with electric magnetism, capable of expressing most irresistible tenderness, as well as malignant hatred. A fine elastic form, a most graceful contour throughout—and I knew that flexible voice could be most musically modulated, as well as harsh and scornful. In every mood he would sustain a subtle power akin to fascination over a susceptible heart. A man to fear or love to distraction. And I felt as certain in those moments of speculation, as he seemed to, that he would marry Gracie if he chose to do so, even if circumstances had not favored him so strongly. It was not a pleasant, but an assuring prospect, yet my heart clung still more tenaciously, if possible, to Gracie.

"I hardly know how it happened, whether wholly involuntarily or not, that my steps turned that night toward that part of the city where she resided. But an irresistible impulse made me loiter, linger near the house where she dwelt. Just as I had passed a few steps beyond the gate, a man alighted from a hack, and ran briskly up the broad steps.

"The parlor was brilliantly lighted, and in the glare, as he was admitted, I instantly recognized Hart Greenleaf. In a moment another man crept cautiously around the corner of the house, and raising himself slightly, peered stealthily through the window into the lighted room. Then rubbing his white hands as if quite satisfied, he retraced his steps.

"An uncontrollable desire to see Gracie once more made me play the same despicable part; but I saw what made my heart burn with nearly overpowering rage as I looked into that room. Hart Greenleaf *en route* was bending tenderly over timid drooping Gracie as he led her to a seat and sat down beside her. I hardly know how

I restrained myself from entering and driving him out at once. But by a mighty effort I controlled myself, and hurried away, going, I hardly knew or cared where. But soon, walking blindly, swiftly on, away from the thickly settled part of the city, I became conscious that some one was walking closely behind me. I turned impatiently, too anxious to be alone to endure even a step behind me, and with a mocking laugh, I caught the gleam of black eyes I knew full well, as a voice said, hissinglly:

"So you will not be warned! you even play the spy, do you? Then take that."

"I jumped aside, stooping slightly, and the ball, probably intended for my heart, grazed my left ear, and a crushing blow over the head with some heavy instrument at the same instant levelled me. He meant it should be a sure job, you see, Ned. I had wandered restlessly on so far, he following me, till we were in a lonely place, that we were quite alone at the opportunity he improved.

"Two men returning quite late chanced upon me, and one of them happening to know me, I was taken home insensible, remaining unconscious till morning. At first they feared it had settled me; but finally I came around, though this place on my skull never has felt just right, Ned, for it was an ugly blow.

"When I was in a condition to inform my anxious friends just what had happened to me, and by whom, the house was found empty. Not a trace of my would-be murderer could be found.

"Three long years, dreary plodding years passed, such as one lives when the light and hope have gone out of his life, during which I grew surly and reserved, yet was really successful in my profession. How I badgered the witnesses about that time! It was my chief delight to make others as uncomfortable as myself, and their glances of extreme disgust were a sweet tribute of pleasure to me.

"One evening, 'twas just the close of that session when the tiresome will case was decided, and I returned to my office tired and heartsick of it all, yet treasuring with grim satisfaction the opprobrium and the hatred I had brought upon myself from the contesting party, because I had secured for that timid little lady the comfortable sum of a hundred thousand; prov-

ing beyond the shadow of a doubt, seemingly, that the querulous but wealthy widow was in her right mind, and entirely uninfluenced in bequeathing to her loving companion and nurse this handsome property, all for disinterested affection, and leaving her grasping relatives 'out in the cold.'

"I pleaded well for her, and there was a warm corner in my warped heart at the remembrance of that humid grateful glance from eyes the color, and nearly as sweet, as my lost Gracie's. And just at that remembrance, the boy entered with, 'Letters, sir.'

"I took up several and glanced hurriedly through them, then one which I read twice, slowly, these words, in a tremulous irregular hand:

"R. H. BENNETT, Esq.,—Will you come at once to 120 Avon Place, and confer a favor, with a promise of a loving reward, to an old enemy who is—well, *hors-du-combat*? In haste,

"GRACIE'S GUARDIAN."

"Then without further delay, forgetful of weariness, I caught up my hat, told the boy I was suddenly called away, hurried to the street, and hailing a car, was soon on my way to Avon Place, my sluggish heart bounding furiously.

"I caught just a glimpse of a slender graceful form, the flutter of a light dress, as I entered the luxurious parlor at Avon Place, where I waited a few moments, watching anxiously, eagerly, the door through which that form I knew so well had disappeared, and then I was conducted by a servant to a spacious upper room, where, supported by pillows, lay my enemy, '*hors-du-combat*,' truly. His handsome face, wan and ghastly, looked still more so by contrast with the masses of jetty hair clustering around it in careless profusion; here and there a thread of silvery white—that dazzling glassy white which such black hair takes when touched by age—made its deep blackness more apparent. The full black eyes were glassy with an intense burning light, and bespoke the unrest of the scheming soul beneath inaction. This I took at a glance; for there are some who make such a vivid impression upon the mind that it receives *minutiæ* in detail, every part of the impressive whole, as quickly as we compass the outline of a tiny



picture. He extended a hand so white and attenuated I hesitated to touch it; and laughing that sneering laugh yet, he said:

"You see I'm not afraid of you now, Bennett, for the law will hardly meddle with such a wreck as this; there's not enough left to fight, you see, and so they will have to give me up to that Higher Court, where it seems a fellow don't have the ghost of a chance unless he's tremendous good.' And he laughed again.

"There was such a daring levity in the man's manner, so near to death, that I could not speak for a moment, and he continued:

"I'm glad I didn't kill you now, Bennett, as I meant to, for you see I've got to give in; and as I haven't married Gracie yet, I shan't be able to."

"He looked at me steadily a moment, with a glance I did not understand, then said:

"I've learned you are not married yet, and now I want to know from you whether you love my little girl? You know what I told you, Bennett, and I now repeat it, putting it a little stronger. There isn't a man in the world I'd sooner give my Gracie to than you. Now—do you want her?" he asked, suddenly, a strange tremor in the usually strong voice.

"When a man at my age falls deeply in love he doesn't get over it easily. Your ward is very dear to me, but—does she care for me?" I asked.

"Bah! You've got to find that out yourself. I give you leave to. They say you're a pretty smart lawyer now, and I guess you'll be able to plead your own cause. I was only afraid you might try to catch the little woman whose case you've won so neatly. They will talk, you know, and I've kept myself well posted in your affairs since I got back here, a week ago."

"Then moving slightly, he uttered a deep groan, followed by a muttered imprecation in which was Hart Greenleaf's name.

"I looked at him inquiringly, and he said:

"You haven't asked me what brought me to this state, and perhaps you don't know."

"I assured him that I did not know, and he continued:

"And I haven't given you a chance to ask. Well, I played my game with Hart, and won, in that I fleeced him well, and

then he turned raving when he suspected I'd been cheating him. You see he thought I was going to give Gracie to him. But that evening you looked in upon them was the last time I let him see her alone. I took Gracie to Paris; he followed, and after tampering with him a while longer, winning largely from him, I gave him the slip again, and for some time we kept clear of him; but finally he found us out. He called me all sorts of pretty, fond names, and when I laughed at him, he flew into a rage and tried to kill me. Well, I'd had enough of skulking, and tried to calm him, and work away from him, not liking a fuss among strangers. To make the story short, he demanded Gracie, tried to steal her, and all that sort of thing; then he met me again, we quarrelled, and I tried to get away from him; but he was mad with liquor, and parrying only on the defensive, as he fought me, I got an ugly thrust in the side. I was careless and restless; inflammation set in, but I got better, then got cold, fever set in, the wound somehow wouldn't heal—is still open. I've wasted away, got a bad cough, and, well—they say I must give in. Curse him! Gracie feels bad, poor little girl! I've been hard to her sometimes, but still she cares for me. Just pull that cord, will you, Bennett?"

"I did as he desired, and a sharp peal sounded. In a moment the door opened quickly, and Gracie stood before me, with flushed cheeks from haste, and a startled look in her blue eyes. When she saw me she flushed still more deeply, and would have retreated, but Mr. Carson held out his hand, saying:

"O no, no, Gracie! Come here, dear, I want you."

"She came timidly to him, and he took her small hand in his. Then turning toward me, he said:

"Mr. Bennett, Gracie. Miss Alden, Bennett."

"She gave me her soft hand in a trusting way, with a few murmured words of greeting, then Mr. Carson said:

"I've been talking so much with Bennett, I'm thirsty, Gracie."

"The words were scarcely uttered ere she turned quickly and left the room. His eyes followed her with a fond glance, and as soon as the door closed, he murmured:

"Sweet, timid creature! She'll feel less embarrassed when she comes back."

"In a few minutes she returned, with some tea in a glass, which he swallowed at a draught; making a grimace, he said:

"You see I don't take kindly to herb drinks, but my little nurse insists upon following directions, and I must bear the result of folly. I wonder if you will make as tender and faithful a nurse to Bennett when he's laid up any time, Gracie?" he said, softly, tenderly stroking her hand as she smoothed his pillows. She started from him, flushing painfully, but he held the hand he had taken firmly, and continued, laughingly:

"Don't run away, dear. You see I've given you away, Gracie, and if Bennett is not real good to you, why, I'll haunt him; but there, he'll be a great deal better to you than I have been. He's a different sort of a fellow, you see, Gracie, and—"

"Don't!" she said, lowly, a sound of tears in her voice.

"I gave a hasty glance at the lovely face, so flushed and drooping in painful embarrassment, and I rose resentfully. Why would the man be such a fool, I thought! He looked up at me, smiling in his olden aggravating way, and then releasing Gracie's hand, he murmured:

"There, there, never mind, dear!"

"She turned quickly from him, and flashing one resentful glance at me, her eyes filled with tears, she hastened from the room.

"I gave him a fiercely indignant look, I presume, and laughing again, he said:

"Be patient, Bennett; you see the evil one reigns in me yet, and I like to plague you."

"At his earnest desire I made several calls upon the sick man, arranged some business matters, in the last of which I learned that the old nurse's story was true; but the only explanation he deigned to give was that he always disliked the old woman, and for some reason he wanted Gracie to feel dependent upon him, while he used the money which rightfully belonged to her. He was a great gambler, and at that time he owned he lost heavily. But of late years he had been successful in every venture or undertaking; and at his death, which soon occurred, Gracie was well provided for. The old nurse had been with her all of the time after her severe illness.

"The parting at the last between guar-

dian and ward was very affecting, and I believe with all that was noble in his strange nature, Will Carson truly loved his little charge. But ah! the evil selfishness of his willful arbitrary nature held predominance through his daring life, and he strove to make everything subservient to that.

"After the funeral, which I attended, I called to see Gracie, determining, as her late guardian desired, to urge a speedy marriage, if she looked favorably upon my proposals—that being the greatest desire of my heart. Imagine my surprise when the old lady came to me, bowing stiffly, and told me in a constrained voice that her dear Gracie had gone away for a spell, and said she was to tell me if I called and there was any business to be attended to, I could tell her about it. Cool, now, wasn't it, Ned? Well, I told her shortly, as stiffly, I suppose, as she had talked to me, that I didn't know of any business that would require her immediate attention, as everything had, I believed, been satisfactorily arranged; then I coolly bade her 'good-evening,' and as I turned away, the old lady said, timidly, 'Mr. Bennett!'

"I turned to her instantly, but she stood in a confused state, saying nothing further till I asked:

"Well, what did you want, Mrs. Aylie?"

"She clasped her hands in a nervous way she had, and after a momentary hesitation, she said, falteringly:

"I—I didn't really want anything, but, sir—well, you've been real kind—and—do not be mad, sir," she ended, nervously, clasping her hands; and with a murmured good-night she left me.

"Satisfactory, wasn't it, Ned? Then Gracie didn't really care for me, after all, I thought, as I wended my way slowly home in no very amiable mood. The resentful look I had before attributed to her trying, embarrassing position, I now accepted as being specially intended for and directed to me. I made myself extremely uncomfortable by appropriating everything unpleasant.

"Gracie's conduct to me under the circumstances seemed a dismissal. All my assurance left, I persuaded myself readily that Gracie did not, never had cared for me. 'And why should a beautiful young lady care for a hardened old foggy like me?' I asked. I'd been a fool, of course I had.

should have known better from the first. So I shut my mouth still closer, and my heart, too, and went back to my books and profession with renewed zeal. And for a year longer, Ned, I don't believe an uglier, more discontented man lived. Gracie, poor and ill-treated, was a very different person, you see, from Gracie wealthy and free.

"Well, to shorten and end this tediously long story now as soon as possible, I had been attending a session at Raynor, a dull dingy hole, where, at the one badly-conducted house claiming the pretentious name of 'Hotel,' we had nothing fit to eat. I was glad to get out of it all, and was in a worse temper than ever. I entered the old stagecoach with a whack and vengeance—striving, literally, to shake the very dust, or rather snow, and dirt of Raynor off my feet. Four men, and a little lady nearly hidden in furry wraps and closely veiled, were the occupants of the stage which had started from B——, ten miles beyond, and was to take us twelve miles further to the railway station. The men, cheery old farmers, were inclined to be very sociable, and plied the 'Squire' with innumerable questions, to which, alas, they got but sorry answers; and after most persevering efforts, they got discouraged, and talked among themselves, the lady and I remaining silent.

"The road was bad, the travelling consequently very disagreeable, all pitches and gullies, but I was glad of it, because every jerk gave me some reasonable cause to growl, until—well, the horses had become frisky and unmanageable from continued worrying, and the driver had, I should judge, taken in a pretty good supply of the invigorator to cheer him on his rugged way, and probably was careless. Away we plunged, recklessly, for a mile or more, until we were about five miles from the station, when whack, thud, down we went furiously into a tremendous pitch, and over went the rickety old stage!

"We were piled up there promiscuously in double-quick time, the fractious horses still pulling and hauling. One old man groaned dismally, and in an interval of his noisy groaning, I heard a feeble moan, a sob, as it were. I knew then the little lady was injured, perhaps badly. As soon as we could extricate ourselves, I found the

thick veil torn aside from the pale quivering face, and—well, I took care of poor little Gracie, pale and suffering again, with a bruised head and a broken arm. And, Ned, I vowed mentally I wouldn't lose her again unless—ah! how did I know but that she was already married? else how came she way up here? But as soon as she was comfortable enough to talk she told me the old nurse had been to visit some old friends in B——, was taken very ill, and she had been to see her. I got a sleigh, and took my precious charge to comfortable quarters as soon as possible. And then my former confidence partially returned, and one day I said to her:

"Gracie, don't you think I've waited about long enough now? Or do you propose to make me wait as long as Jacob did for his Rachel? I am very unhappy, Gracie!

"A smile flickered about the tender mouth a moment, then straightening her graceful form, she said, constrainedly:

"I do not know, Mr. Bennett, that I have ever intimated that it was my desire that you should wait, or given you any assurance that by—

"I couldn't stand any more, Ned, for her sweet voice, which I had thought really tender when speaking with me for a few days past, was as cold as an iceberg now.

"Gracie! I faltered out, as I turned from her, feeling that I had made a most egregious blunder somehow, and that I was a far greater bungler at love-making than at the bar. I stood still a few minutes, feeling as if I had got a stunning blow, unable to walk; then I made an effort to leave the room, to rid her of my disagreeable presence. My hand was on the doorknob when I felt a light touch upon my arm, and looking down upon a blushing drooping face, a tremulous voice whispered:

"I—I think you have waited long enough, Mr. Bennett? And then *my Gracie*, at last, was softly crying in my arms.

"There, Ned, I must enjoy that exquisite sensation which never has wholly left me, a moment, in silence sweet. I haven't been married but two years yet, Ned. And when it is a union of hearts—a true marriage in the sight of Heaven as well as earth, one will, one hope, a full accord through life, a true love (and I believe that there may be such on earth)—should love grow cold or old, Ned?"

## **GRANDFATHER GREY'S BOUND-BOY.**

Shaw, Blanche

*Ballou's Monthly Magazine* (1866-1893); Mar 1873; 37, 3; American Periodicals

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### **GRANDFATHER GREY'S BOUND-BOY.**

**BY BLANCHE SHAW.**

"A **LITTLE** lower, Reuben; so that it will form a graceful festoon."

Reuben fastened the rosebush, and came down from the ladder.

"Is that right, Miss Evelyn?"

"Yes. I think Mr. Desmond will like that. He said, if those rosevines only drooped down, and swayed like gossamer webs, the porch would be a fairy bower."

The girl spoke half to herself; but the youth heard each word plainly. He knitted

his brows, and his cheek grew pale. Suddenly he turned to her.

"Miss Evelyn," said he, slowly, "do you remember, when you were first brought here, a little frightened babe, how a rude, rough boy tried to comfort you; and when he found he could say nothing to stop your tears, took you in his arms, and cried with you, till you fell asleep. And then, when you grew older and stronger, how he watched over you, taking you with him

into the fields, and when your little feet grew weary, carrying you in his strong arms. In school, how he loved you better than his life, and would gladly have given his life to protect you? Do you remember this, Miss Evelyn?"

Evelyn looked amazed.

"Why, Reuben! Of course I remember."

"Then, for the sake of that memory, forgive my presumption, and listen to what I say! Miss Evelyn, Mr. Desmond is a bad man?"

Evelyn's eyes flashed, and she exclaimed haughtily:

"Reuben, how dare you?"

He flushed under her tone, but continued:

"I dare, Miss Evelyn, because I love you. Don't look at me so scornfully. If my life's blood could make you happy, you should have it. O Miss Evelyn, believe me. He is a bad man, and if you trust your happiness to him, he will destroy it. I can prove—"

"Silence!" interrupted the girl. "How dare you use such language to me! How dare you insult me! How dare you speak so of a gentleman, and you nothing but a common low bound-boy! O, how I hate you!"

The youth put up his hands.

"Don't! don't say that, Miss Evelyn!"

"But I will say it! And I mean it, too! I'll tell my grandfather. I'll—"

The other threat was cut short by the sound of approaching hoofs; and the next minute a gentleman rode up the lane, and stopped a short distance from the pair. A blush drove the anger from the girl's face, and the youth, tightly clenching his hands, turned to walk away; but the rider called to him:

"I say, you fellow, come hold my horse." But the "fellow" did not heed him. He walked on, till the girl said:

"Reuben, go hold Mr. Desmond's horse."

He turned, and looked at her, with a beseeching light in his eyes; but she only said:

"Do you hear, sir?" And shutting his teeth firmly, he obeyed.

The horse was spirited, Reuben seized his bridle roughly. He reared, and before Reuben's strong hand could control him, his rider, fell, not very gracefully, to the ground. He sprang to his feet and cried:

"You insolent clown! I'll teach you how to treat a gentleman!" And quick as

lightning he struck Reuben across the face with his whip.

For one moment he was blinded by the pain; and the next Mr. Desmond lay in the dust, and his horse was galloping down the lane. Evelyn shrieked.

"He has killed him! Help, help!"

The servants rushed from the house. Reuben looked at the prostrate form a moment, and then without a word walked away.

Mr. Desmond was not killed. They gathered around him, and helped him to his feet. Then he was taken to the house, and the blood was washed off his face; and he enjoyed the privilege of a hero, for the rest of the day. That night when he was riding slowly home, on his recaptured horse, Reuben came out from his hiding-place. He stole softly to his room, packed a few clothes in a bundle, and stole out again. He paused on the porch, the rose-bush that had forced those rash words of the morning from his lips, sighed over his head. He looked up at Evelyn's window. A light was streaming from it, and soon he saw a shadow on the curtain. He left the porch, and threw himself on his knees on the wet grass, where the shadow fell. He watched the window till the light went out; then he arose, and went away in the darkness, aged twenty, friendless and penniless.

Governor Hunt was alone in his library. He was a tall, powerfully-built man, about thirty-five years of age, with dark hair, already mixed with gray, and a face whose charm was its honest manliness. He was seated by a table covered with papers, and so deeply engaged, that he did not hear a knock at the door till it was repeated. Then he said, "Come in," without looking up, and a servant entered. "What is the meaning of this, James?" he asked. "My orders were, not to be interrupted."

"I beg your excellency's pardon; but there is a woman below, who would not be denied. She says that it is a matter of life or death; and that if I would not take her message, she must force her way to you."

The governor's brow darkened. He hesitated a minute, and then said, "Show her up, James; but tell her to be brief."

James retired; and in a short time a woman dressed in black and deeply veiled entered. She advanced a few steps, and

then stopped. Her hand hung listlessly before her, and her head was bowed. The governor rose and handed her a chair.

"Pray be seated, madam; and pardon me if I request you to be as brief as possible."

Still the woman did not move. And touched by the abject misery of her appearance, he went to her, and said kindly:

"Do not be alarmed, madam. What can I do for you?"

The woman took one staggering step, and then fell on her knees at his feet, and holding out her clasped hands wailed:

"Mercy! Mercy, sir! For the sake of the good God above us, spare my husband's life's!"

The governor did not speak, but stooped to raise her. At that moment she threw aside her veil. He started back. His face grew white, and clutching the back of a chair he gasped:

"Great heavens! Miss Evelyn?"

Amazement for an instant displaced the agony on the woman's face.

"Miss Evelyn! Who calls me by that name! Who are you?"

By a strong effort he controlled himself, and said:

"Has time wiped out all traces of my former self! Am I indeed all changed? Look again; and try if memory will not tell you!"

She looked intently a moment; then a look of terror came into her eyes, and burying her face in her hands, she moaned:

"Yes! yes. I know you! Heaven help us. You are Reuben Hunt!"

A silence followed, broken only by her sobs. Then he went to her again, and tried to raise her, but she shrank from him.

"No, no; let me lie here like the crushed woman I am! Governor Hunt, you once had a heart; have mercy now! Put the past from you! Spare my husband. You must have a wife and children. Think of them, robbed of husband and father, by the hangman. Have mercy on me, as you hope God will have mercy on you!"

She crouched lower. The governor looked at the shivering form. Twice he tried to speak, but his tongue refused to obey him. Finally, by a mighty effort he whispered hoarsely:

"Miss Evelyn, your husband's true name is—?" He stopped and waited for the answer, which came low and faint.

"Arthur Desmond?"

"God guide me right!" he half uttered, half groaned, and folding his arms tightly across his breast, he walked the floor with uneasy steps.

Finally, he stopped beside her.

"Miss Evelyn! Mrs. Desmond! you have put me through an ordeal fiercer than fire. You shrouded my duty in such blackness, that even now I can see no light to guide me. Your husband has done me wrongs, that only blood can wipe out. Justice now demands life; can I wash my hands in innocence, and let it take its course! And dare I, for your sake, and because of what has been, bid Justice stop! What a mockery is power, in such an hour as this!" And the strong man bowed his head and wept with the woman.

One, two, three, five minutes passed, and then he raised his head. His eyes were red, but his face was firm and calm. He went to Evelyn, and lifting her to her feet, said:

"Mrs. Desmond, I will grant your petition. To-morrow your husband shall be pardoned." And before she could speak, he led her to the door, handed her out, and closed it between them.

The morning came; and with it the pardon for the prisoner. His wife was already at the jail, waiting the time to be admitted to him. The officer read the paper with a frowning brow; but law was all-powerful. Law rent the paper, and they went to the cell. The door grated on its hinges, and swung open; but they halted on the threshold; another deliverer had been there before them. Arthur Desmond lay dead by his own hand.

One year from the ghastly morning in the cell, Evelyn Desmond sat at her desk, guiding with heavy eyes and weary fingers the pen that earned her food and shelter. The day was near its grave, and long shadows fell over the paper; but still her pen flew on, till the strained eyes could no longer direct its course; then she dashed it down, and leaning her head on her arms wept bitterly. The shadows lost themselves in gloom; and darkness filled the room. Still she sat with bowed head, till a servant knocked at the door, and informed her that Governor Hunt desired to see her. Evelyn arose, struck a light, and strove to remove the traces of her tears, half wondering what had brought him.

It was not yet time for the papers to be finished, and besides, he always sent his clerk to attend to such business. And then, she thought of his noble kindness to her in her great desolation. How he had watched over and protected her, and yet so disguised his goodness, that he, not she, seemed the one under obligation. These thoughts made her heart beat, and her hand tremble, as she laid it upon the knob to open the parlor door. Reuben rose to meet her. He took her trembling hand and led her to a seat.

"Are you well to-night, Mrs. Desmond?" he asked, as the light, falling on her face, betrayed tear marks she had failed to remove.

"Perfectly, thank you," she replied; "only a little tired."

"Tired?" he echoed; and then his memory went back to the day, when like a butterfly, she flitted from pleasure to pleasure, and tired only in their pursuit.

"Tired! Mrs. Desmond, you must not work so hard."

She smiled wearily.

"My work is my bread." Then after a pause, "And besides, work kills thought." She drew her hand wearily across her brow. *There was a silence for a few minutes*, and then the governor spoke.

"Mrs. Desmond, I came here to-night, to ask you to decide a question for me. My friends have kindly tendered to me a renomination, and it is for you to decide whether I shall accept it."

"Me, sir?" She looked wonderingly at him a second, and then reading his meaning in his eyes, she buried her face in her hands, and half sobbed:

"No, no! Do not ask me! I am not worthy of it!"

He left his chair, and standing by her said huskily:

"O Evelyn, my darling, do not say that. You are all the world to me. Think of the long years I have loved and waited. Spite of trials, suffering and success, my love has never wavered. It has burned as brightly as it did the night I knelt on the grass to kiss your shadow, before I went away. Speak, Evelyn! May I stay here with you, or must I again put miles of land and water between us? O my darling! it was God's own hand brought you to me! He will, he must let me keep you. O Evelyn! can you not love me, just a little?"

He bent over her, and his breath stirred her hair. She looked up.

"Reuben, best, noblest of men! do you think I could accept the rich gift of your love; and give you only a little in return? No! no! I would rather a thousand times drag out my life a chained galley slave."

"Evelyn," he cried, but she stopped him.

"Wait, Reuben, hear me. I will take your love, for I can give as great a one in return. Take me Reuben, I am yours!"

And Evelyn Desmond rested her weary head on the true breast of Grandfather Grey's Bound-boy.



## GRANDMAMMA'S CANCELLATION.

BY MARY L. BRANCH.

GRANDMAMMA was such a funny old lady. She sat in a straight high-backed chair with a lion's head carved at the top, and she wore a black dress, a white muslin kerchief, and a cap with tall crimped ruffles all around it. There she sat all day long knitting mittens; her eyes looked very wise and bright behind her spectacles, she nodded her head briskly sometimes and made sharp little speeches, and well she knew how to bring up little boys. It almost seemed to Tommy as if she would read his very thoughts, whenever he was wishing he could play truant, or planning to go softly down into the cellar for gingerbread.

Tommy sat with his fingers plunged in his curly hair, poring over his arithmetic lesson, and every now and then he scratched out some figures with his pencil.

"Aint cancellation a jolly rule though?" he exclaimed.

"How does it work, dear?" asked grandmamma.

"O, just as easy! When there's a number below the line that's like a number above the line, you cancel them both, and so they're out of the way. Don't you see, grandma? See how hard this sounds—multiply 6 by 8 and by 49 and by 300 and by 27, and then divide all that by 9 multiplied by 7 multiplied by 100 multiplied by 7 multiplied by 6 multiplied by 8. It took Bob Davis a whole half hour to work it out the long way, because he was too lazy to learn to cancel. But I can cancel. You strike out 6 above and 6 below, and 8 above and 8 below, then 49 above and the two sevens below because 7 times 7 makes 49, then 100 below and 300 above, only you must leave a 3 over the 300 because it was 3 times as much as 100, then 9 below and 27 above, but leave 3 over the 27 because it is 3 times as much as 9. Then there is only left 3 to be multiplied by 3 above the line, and that makes 9. And there is nothing at all left to divide by, so the answer is just 9. Set me an example, and see, grandmamma, how quick I can do it."

"Not now," said grandmamma, with an odd little smile. "But maybe I will this evening. Why, Tommy, it's almost two

o'clock! Seize your slate, snatch your hat, and be off before the wind!"

The short winter afternoon slipped swiftly by, and it was almost time to light the lamps, when he came Tommy in a bluster, slamming the door, and furious. Billy Taft had stolen his sled at recess, Bob Davis had pinched him, and Bert had hit him in the face with a snowball and made his nose bleed.

"I'll pay 'em off to-morrow," grumbled Tommy, and almost crying.

Grandmamma peered at him over her spectacles, and then she went to her own corner cupboard and took two anise-seed cookies from a jar for poor turbulent Tommy. He felt better with each mouthful.

"And now," said she, "get your slate, Tommy, and sit down upon this little stool beside me, and I'll give you a sum in cancellation."

Tommy was all ready in a minute with slate and pencil.

"Now draw a line."

Tommy drew it.

"Now put above the line that Bob pinched you, and Bert hit you, and all the other troubles you met with to-day."

"Why, what funny arithmetic!" said Tommy, staring.

"This is my sort of cancellation," replied grandma. "Have you written them all down?"

There was a pause while Tommy tried to remember all his grievances. But at last he thought he had them all put down.

"Now what goes below the line?" asked Tommy, curiously.

"Ah yes!" said grandma. "Did you do anything to Billy?"

"Told the teacher and got him a licking," said Tom, promptly.

"What made Bert snowball you?"

"'Cause I tripped him up, and—he fell—and—broke his popgun," explained Tommy, slowly and with evident reluctance.

"Put that below the line," said grandma, "and think of all the naughty things you have done to-day, and put them all below the line."

Tommy's face fell, he was beginning to understand grandmamma's arithmetic. He set



down a few things and handed her the slate.  
This is the way the sum read:

Billy stole my sled.  
 Bob pinched me.  
 Bert made my nose  
 bleed.  
 Tom's dog bit me.  
 Teacher scolded me.  
 Lost my pen-knife.  
 Scrapped my shin.  
 Mr. Jones says he'll  
 whip me next time  
 he sees me.  
 Mother wouldn't give  
 me pudding at din-  
 ner.  
 Had to chop wood this  
 morning, so I was  
 late to school.  
 Bell laughed at me.  
 Got to review gram-  
 mar.  
 Got a stomach-ache.  
 My boot hurts me.

Got Billy's stick.  
 Knocked Bob down.  
 Made Bert break his  
 popgun.  
 Tried to tease Bob.  
 Liked Willie Jones.  
 Ate mother's mince.

Grandamma looked at the slate and laughed, her eyes twinkling behind her specs.

"I'm sure there ought to be more below the line," she said. "How did you escape your shin, Tommy?"

Now that was something that Tommy had meant to keep secret. Betty had made mince pies the day before, he knew, but they were nowhere in the pantry, for he had looked thoroughly. So that very morning he had stolen softly down cellar to search, and there, sure enough, he found them under a tub. He broke off quite a piece from one and started up, but on the dark steps he stumbled and fell, and that was why his poor shin was even now sore and aching. Little by little it all came out, and at grandma's direction he wrote on the slate below the line:

"Went down cellar to steal mince pie."

"There," said grandma, "cancel that and cancel the sore shin, and you won't have anything left to complain of there. And don't you think what you did to Willie Jones cancels what Mr. Jones is going to do to you? Cancel them both out—you've nothing to complain of there, Tommy. Bell did quite right to laugh at you when you teased her—cancel those two things out."

"O, I can finish it up, now!" said Tommy, ruefully. "I suppose Bert's broken popgun cancels out my nose-bleed. And I'll let Bill's licking cancel his stealing my sled. And maybe knocking Bob down was as bad as his pinching me. But I have lots of troubles left, grandma." And Tommy drew a long face as he thought how his stomach ached, and how his boot pinched, and how he had gone puddlingless.

"I guess the raisins you ate," said grandma, slyly, "are what made so few in our pudding this noon, and perhaps that is why you had no pudding at all, and why your stomach aches, eh, Tommy?"

Tommy blushed a little and cancelled the items without a word. Then he confessed that he had kicked Jem's dog before it bit him, and he had drawn a saucy picture of the teacher which was reason enough for the scolding. So there was a chance for more cancelling.

As for the boot pinching his foot, it was well known in the family that Tommy chose his own boots at the store, and rejected his father's advice, because this pair looked so much prettier and trimmer on his foot. He didn't mind then how they made his toes lap over each other, and grandma did not fail to suggest a little cancelling there.

And then how do you suppose it turned out about the chopping wood? Why, Tommy's father told him to do it the afternoon before, when there was plenty of time, and because he didn't mind then, he had to do it in the morning, and was anybody but Tommy himself to blame for that? As to the review lesson in grammar, good boys who learn their lessons thoroughly every day are not afraid of reviews, and what could Tommy expect when he had failed in every recitation for a week, except when he peeped into his book, and that was worse than failing.

So all Tommy's woes were cancelled out by his misdeeds, except losing his penknife, and that had been a lame thing for months with a broken blade. He looked a good deal taken aback at the result of grandamma's cancellation, and began to feel like a very naughty little boy indeed. There was no more complaining nor naughtiness that evening, but Tommy sat at the table studying his lessons, so modest and so quiet, that it made grandamma smile, as she sat in her high-backed chair knitting, and she said to herself there was hope of this little boy yet.

And so there was, for Tommy was a bright boy and did not forget this odd new kind of arithmetic. He could not help seeing after that, that he never got a scolding unless he had done wrong, and never got into a quarrel except when he felt ugly, the cat never scratched him unless he teased her, his lessons were never poor unless he had failed to study them. In fact, he found if he wanted everything to go right with him, he had only to keep himself right to start with.

## GRANDMOTHER'S DREAM.

BY M. QUAD OF THE MICHIGAN PRESS.

"We shall have a visit from the Indians before night," remarked my grandmother, looking across the breakfast-table at grandfather.

"Well, I hope we will," replied grandfather, a little doggedly. "You are eternally predicting an Indian raid, and, just to please you, I hope we shall get a call from at least a hundred."

"Look out, Peter Barnes! You may have cause to regret that speech before you are half a day older. I dreamed last night just how they came, what they did, what we did, and it makes my blood run cold to think of it."

Grandfather made no reply, realizing that she had always had the better of him in argument, and the meal was finished in silence.

A year before, my relatives, both of whom were nearly fifty years old, but strong and hearty, sold out their farm in Ohio, and located in Western Kansas. Their children were all married off, and the old couple were entirely alone. They had a stout and comfortable log cabin, a good farm, and had already made many improvements.

The location was not thought to be a dangerous one, although a few miles beyond the last hamlet in that section, and three miles in advance of the location of the previous settler. The Indians had raided this part of the country the year before, but the soldiers had given them a severe rebuke, and it was not believed that they would dare venture back again. Grandfather was certain that he would not be interrupted in his peaceful pursuits, and was annoyed that grandmother should croak of evil.

More because it was the custom, than from any idea that he would ever have use for it, grandfather kept a rifle in the house; and one day, when a settler who was owing him money, and could not pay, brought a revolver to him as the only offset he could offer, grandfather took it, and laid it up on a shelf.

In her young days, grandmother had been an emphatic "romp." She could

skate, play ball, pitch quoits, ride at a gallop, shoot a rifle, and even to the day she was married went by the name of "Bailey's Tomboy;" yet, after all, she made a good wife, and was the "making" of Peter Barnes.

She stood in the door that morning and watched Peter bring out his horses and plow, and drive off through the fields to his work, half a mile away. Then she looked to the west, back at the sun, and went in and took the rifle down from its hooks. It had been loaded for months, and she drew the bullet, carefully wiped the barrel, and loaded the weapon again as nicely as a hunter could have done it. Placing it in a corner, she went to an old chest, fished out powder, lead, caps and bullet moulds, and soon had fifteen or twenty shining bullets on the table. Then the revolver was got down, cleaned up, loaded, and finally the woman went to the door to look for her husband.

She could see him following the plow in the distant field, and the happy songs of the birds were anything but harbingers of a coming affray in which more than one of those shining bullets would find a human target.

"Peter Barnes, you are an idiot!" spoke the woman, watching him a moment. "I don't want harm to come to a hair of your head, but you will get a fearful lesson before noon this day!"

The arms being in good order, the woman shut the north door, nailed it up, and then nailed boards over the two windows on the inside. The south door fastened with a bar, and she was satisfied with its strength. She went to the spring, filled two pails with water, picked up and carried in the axe, and then cleared the table of dishes, not stopping to wash them. Then she sat down in the south doorway and waited—waited for the Indian attack which she had dreamed of and predicted.

An hour passed, and she had not changed her position. Half an hour more wore away, and then she suddenly leaped up and seized her rifle. She had seen the horses stop and begin to rear and plunge as they

came near the south end of the field, which was fringed by the forest. She saw her husband pulling at them and using the whip, but in a moment more the animals dashed off at full speed. Just as they started, grandmother heard a faint "Yi! yi!" and the next moment caught sight of a score of savages as they dashed out of the woods and made for her husband.

"Just exactly as I dreamed," she whispered to herself, lifting the rifle clear of the floor.

Grandfather caught sight of the redskins as soon as they broke cover, and he wheeled and made for the house at his best pace. For a few rods he held his own, but then his fifty years commenced to tell on him, and the shouting Indians began to gain. They were thirty rods behind at the start, but before half the distance to the house had been traversed, they were not ten rods behind.

"Run, father! run for your life!" shouted grandmother, waving her hand to him; and he did his best.

But the old man did not have it in him. He was within rifle-shot of the door, when the redskins bore him down to the grass, right in plain sight of his wife. Five or six of them halted to take care of the prisoner, and the rest, whooping and yelling, made for the house. Grandmother stood square in the door, and the rifle was slowly lifted. When the foremost savage was twenty rods away, out on a line went the barrel, there was a quick report, and the Indian fell forward on the grass. Then she stepped back, closed the door, and the next moment the shouting demons jumped against it. The door stood like a rock. Baffled and disappointed, the Indians hacked at the boards with their tomahawks, as if to hew their way in. Striking away, one of the blows fell on a knot in the plank, and the knot fell at the woman's feet, while a hole as large as a man's fist was left in the door. Encouraged by this, the Indians were chopping away, when grandmother seized the revolver, took swift aim, and a horrible yell mingled with the report. The Indians then fell back to where they had left their prisoner, and were out of range.

Grandfather had his arms tied behind him, and after a few minutes, walked out a few feet in advance of his captors. He looked at the house, then looked back, and refused to obey the command given him.

The Indians advanced, drew their tomahawks, and then the captive shouted:

"Nancy! Nancy! unbar the door, leave the rifle in the house, and come out here. They won't hurt you!"

The wife heard every word of it, and the trembling tones of the old man's voice made her heart ache. But she knew that the Indians had forced him to make the appeal, and that it was only a ruse for them to get another prisoner. She made no reply, and directly the redskins forced the old man to speak again.

"Nancy!" he called, "the Indians say that if you don't come out they will murder me right here."

It was the hardest struggle of her long life, but grandmother realized that both would certainly be murdered if she complied, and that if she held out, there was hope that help might come from immigrants or hunters before night. Tears came to her eyes, and she could not choke down her sobs as she thought of her husband's fate; but she was determined to resist to the last. As she did not reply, one of the Indians, who could speak English quite well, stepped out and shouted:

"Come, hurry up, quick! You no come out, we kill old man!"

"Peter Barnes," shouted grandmother, her mouth at the knothole, "I know that you don't want me to come out, and I shall not come! I have the rifle and revolver, and I shall defend the house to the last! Be on your watch for a chance to break away and run to the house."

The Indians understood sufficient of the speech to know that the woman did not propose to surrender, and they gathered around the prisoner and held a consultation. At length, leaving two of their number to guard him, the others, fifteen in all, made a *detour*, and collected on the north side of the house. They had no arrows, to fire the house from a distance, but gathered brush and piled it against the north door to force the woman to come out.

She had no loopholes on that side, but going up stairs, she softly removed a strip of "chinking" from between two of the logs, thrust through the hand holding the revolver, and, shooting by guess, badly wounded one of the savages. With a great whooping and yelling, the rascals drew out of range and held another consultation. In a few minutes they all reappeared on the

south side, gathered about grandfather, and directly struck a course for the woods from which they had first issued, grandfather being led along behind. The woman watched them with the greatest anxiety, believing that they had abandoned the siege, and that she would never see her husband again.

She waited and watched for about half an hour, and was just thinking of opening the door, when a faint whooping reached her from the woods. A moment after, grandfather came flying across the fields, waving his hands to her as soon as leaving the woods. Two or three minutes later, the Indians burst out of the woods in full cry, but were forty rods behind the fugitive. Grandmother realized that an escape had been made, and she laid down the revolver and stood ready to open the door. As the fugitive got within twenty rods, being then thirty rods ahead of pursuit, she began to unbar the door. She had only touched it, when some one leaped against it—not one, but four or five. Finding it fast, the savages, for such they were, set up a howl of rage and retreated out of range. "Grandfather" was standing still, about fifteen rods from the door, and the woman did not have to look twice to see into the game. One of the Indians had donned the prisoner's clothing, jammed the familiar hat over his forehead, and the pursuit was all a sham. Before he left the woods, four or five Indians had made a *detour* and softly approached the house, so as to be ready to leap in when the bar came down from the door. It was not grandmother's wit, but their own haste in leaping out, which had prevented the capture of the house and her death.

The savages then tried another plan. They brought the old man out of the woods, naked except his shirt, tied him to a wild plum tree just out of rifle range of the house, and then set about maltreating him, hoping to work on the woman's sympathies. Grandmother could see every movement made, and she was nearly crazed to see them assault the old man with knives and clubs. They pricked him until he was covered with blood, though not seriously wounded in any spot, and, cutting a number of switches from the hazel bushes, they whipped him until all were tired with the sport. The old man groaned a little, but they could not make him cry

out as they hoped to do; and in his heart he hoped that grandmother would not be imprudent enough to attempt any interference. Her heart big with sympathy and distress, and her eyes full of tears, the woman allowed the savages to get ahead of her. Several of them moved back out of the range of the knothole, skulked around to the north side of the cabin, and grandmother's first intimation of their presence was when she heard the crackling of flames in the brush which they had previously piled against the north door. As soon as the flames were lighted, the savages drew off a few rods and commenced shooting at the spot over the door where she had pulled out the chinking to shoot at them before. Notwithstanding the whistling of the balls which every moment came through into the garret, the woman mounted the ladder with a pail of water, dashed the contents out through the crevice, and mere accident guided the dash so that the flames were doused out.

Two hours had passed since the first appearance of the Indians; grandmother had killed one and wounded others, and such a firing and yelling had been kept up that the redskins were fearful that help might come to the woman, and therefore they withdrew. She counted them as they went away, to be sure that none were left behind. They took the dead one on their shoulders, and the wounded were assisted along each between two of his companions. They entered the woods, and after an hour had passed without their reappearance, grandmother realized that all danger to her was over. She opened the door, took a scout around the house, and then her eye fell upon the horses. The animals had made a long run when first taking fright, going across the fields for a mile or more, and were now coming towards the house, dragging a portion of the plow after them. In ten minutes the woman was galloping towards the nearest settlement, carrying both rifle and revolver. A ride of an hour brought her to the hamlet, and seven or eight men quickly mounted their horses and returned with her. The cabin had not been disturbed, and leaving their horses there, the men, headed by the anxious and tireless woman, took up the trail of the Indians. Following it for an hour, nearly always on the run, they suddenly heard the report of rifles, followed by whoops and yells.

Two bachelors named Turner had a cabin and a farm in the direction of the shots, and the pursuers realized that the Indians had attacked them. They were hurrying on to the rescue, grandmother leading, rifle in hand, when she suddenly gave a sign of warning, and all sank down. She had caught sight of grandfather and his two guards. Through the sparse timber the men could see grandfather bound to a tree, and his guards standing near by, but their faces turned in the direction of the battle which was raging beyond.

Like so many tigers, the pursuers crept forward, and only halted when within eight or ten rods of the captive. They silently arranged for a volley which should riddle the bodies of the guards, and would have delivered it in a moment more but for grandfather. He caught sight of them, and his joy was so great that he could not repress a loud shout. The Indians turned on hearing it, and also catching sight of the pursuers, gave a yell and darted away. A volley was fired as they fled, and the one behind made a great leap into the air and fell over a log, four or five bullets having struck him in the back.

The other one ran directly for his companions, and his news raised the siege of the Turner cabin in a moment. Finding that a revengeful foe was on their trail, the Indians made all haste out of the neighborhood, and could not be overtaken.

Grandfather was like a child when released. He laughed and cried by turn, threw his arms about grandmother, shook hands with the men, and acted like one

gone crazy. He had been cruelly used by the red rascals, and was so weak when he attempted to start homeward that the men had to carry him most of the way. The couple were not a week getting out of the State, going back to their old home; and in time grandfather recovered and was about again. But to the day of his death, when grandmother took occasion at the breakfast-table to say that she had dreamed of this or that, he never again charged her with being whimsical, or expressed a desire to see her midnight visions fulfilled.

## GREGORY GREGG'S REVENGE.

BY N. P. DARLING.

"I SAY, Lamleigh, you must go to this picnic. The young ladies told me to invite you. They'll expect you, and if you don't go they'll blame me."

"But, my dear John, how can I? You know that I am not acquainted with a single young lady in Vanderburg," I answered. "Of course, if I go, I must carry a lady."

"Yes, and I know a young lady that will go with you. She's a particular friend of Jennie's, and luckily for you, Greggs is out of town."

"Who is Greggs, pray, her father?"

"Pshaw! no, Greggs is the young gentleman who generally waits upon her. He has a room at Farley's where you board, but he's been out of town for the last fortnight. The young lady is Miss Eleanor Kendenwald."

"Never heard of her."

"Of course not, and you won't hear of anybody, or know anybody, if you stick so close to this miserable little office;" and John

Fanchog threw away his cigar in disgust, and began pacing the floor.

While he is stamping up and down the "miserable little office," as he called it, I believe I will introduce myself to "the gentle reader," who will no doubt be pleased to make my acquaintance.

Lambard Lamleigh, at your service; lawyer by profession; thirty-five years of age; of medium height; of fair complexion, with blue eyes and curly hair, with a shade of gold in it; rather good looking countenance, features being regular. I wear a sharp pointed whisker on the point of my chin; hands small and genteel; feet ditto. I dress well and always pay my tailor. How do you like my looks?

I am junior partner in the firm of Vixem & Lamleigh, Boston. A short time before the opening of my story, Vixem proposed that we should open an office in Vanderburg. It is a large place, and there was only one lawyer

here then. We felt sure that it would pay, and so I came down and hired an office, put up an elegant sign over the door, and ensconced myself therein. Next, I advertised in the village newspaper under this very attractive motto:

“Will you walk into my parlor?”  
Said the spider to the fly.”

It took, and I was overwhelmed with business.

Mr. John Fanchog is an old friend of mine. We were schoolmates at Pudger's Academy, and since that time we have corresponded regularly. So when I came to Vanderburg, he was the first person to call upon me. Wasn't we glad to meet each other! and what a glorious evening we spent talking over old times!

John wasn't married, but he was courting “one of the dearest girls, you know,” and he'd been courting her for about five years, and why he didn't marry her is more than I can tell you. He couldn't plead poverty, for his father had left him a very comfortable little fortune, and he'd really nothing to do but enjoy life, and how could he enjoy it without a wife? That's just what I should like to know.

“Shall I take you up and introduce you to Miss Kendenwald?” John asked, turning on his heel to confront me.

“What did you say about a certain Mr. Greggs?”

“Greggs be—blowed!” exclaimed John. “I tell you Nellie Kendenwald is a nice little girl, and I don't want Greggs to have her. She don't care *that* for him,” cried he, snapping his fingers, “but she may marry him if no one else offers.”

“Ah, John, you're looking beyond the picnic, I'm afraid. Are you not trying to make a match for your old friend?”

“Well, what if I am? Hang it, Lamleigh, you must marry some time; and you may think yourself lucky if you get half so good a wife as Eleanor Kendenwald will make you. But I want to introduce you first, and then I'll leave the rest to fate. Come, shall we go?”

“Is she pretty?”

“More than that.”

“Agreeable?”

“She's everything that a man could ask for, either to flirt with or to marry. If she finds you are in earnest she will be so too; but if you are not, why, she'll be careful not

to break her heart on your account. Come, and

“—thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise,  
And make it halt behind her.”

“I'll go.”

“Good. Here's your hat.”

We went out of the office. I locked the door, and taking John's arm, we walked rapidly down the street. It was a summer's evening, clear and bright, the full moon rolling above our heads, agreeable to orders received some time ago from the author of a *once popular song*.

“By the way,” said I, “you haven't told me who this Mr. Greggs is.”

“O, his business, you mean?”

“Yes.”

“He's a photographer. Has a gallery on this street, a few blocks below your office, and I believe he does a very fair business. As I told you before, he is out of town just at present, on a pleasure excursion. He boards at Mr. Farley's, so you will have an opportunity to make his acquaintance when he returns, which may be to-morrow, for aught I know. What is vastly more to your interest to remember is this, he is desperately in love with Eleanor Kendenwald, and he means to marry her.”

“But you say she cares nothing for him?”

“Very well, but didn't you ever hear of a woman marrying a lover to get rid of him?”

“Yes, I've *heard* of such cases.”

“Well, you may hear of another if you remain in Vanderburg. Greggs has already asked Eleanor to marry him. She declined the honor, of course, but that didn't keep him away from her. He'll ask her again one of these days, and he'll keep asking her (if a rival don't snatch her away), until at last, she'll marry him to get rid of him. He is one of those persistent kind of men that never give up while there's the ghost of a hope left. You see I'm posted, my boy. My Jennie and Nellie are the best of friends.”

“Hush!”

“Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?”

“That's Eleanor. I didn't tell you that among her other accomplishments, she could sing like a nightingale.”

We had stopped suddenly as the tones of that melodious voice fell upon our ears. I was enchanted, and breathlessly listened to the notes of the plaintive song that came

floating out upon the evening air, swelling in billows of melody around us, then fading, dying away, as sweetly as the lingering tones of a silver bell.

"Tottering above  
In her highest noon,  
The enamored moon  
Blushes with love."

quoted John.

The song had ceased, but the night seemed "filled with music," and the sweet harmony of plaintive sounds still lingers in my ears.

"Come, let us go in."

I was first introduced to Mrs. Kendenwald, the sweet singer's mother, a widow lady, but young and handsome still, who might have bewitched a much younger man than myself, but for her daughter, whose freshness of complexion rather threw the more elderly fair in the shade. Next, I made my bow to Miss Kendenwald, the late Mr. K.'s maiden sister, a lady over whose head some thirty-five golden summers had flown, and who was not quite so beautiful as a poet's dream; and then I was presented to the peerless Eleanor, a blonde beauty, with eyes of the deep blue of heaven, brow of pearl, and "tresses like the morn."

"I have taken it upon myself," said John, seating himself by the side of Mrs. Kendenwald, "to introduce my legal friend to Venderburg society."

Miss Kendenwald simpered and attempted to look interesting; and she succeeded. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, she was the most interesting specimen of *that* style of beauty that I ever beheld; but it wasn't exactly *my* style.

Mrs. Kendenwald, in the name of Venderburg society, expressed her thanks to John for introducing me, and then they glided into ordinary topics of conversation, the maiden aunt occasionally dropping in a word, knitting violently meanwhile, with one eye on her glancing needles and the other on your humble servant, who was making himself agreeable to the fair-haired Eleanor, who was as lively as a bottle of champagne, but O, so much sweeter!

(If any of my readers do not like that simile, they can choose one to suit themselves.)

"The picnic? O, I shall be delighted to go!"

That was what she said when I asked her to accompany me. So that was settled. And then I asked her to sing. She rose to comply with my request, and I led her to the piano.

"And now what shall I sing, Mr. Lamleigh?" she asked, while her rosy-tipped fingers were softly kissing the ivory keys.

"The song you sang just before we came in."

"Did you hear it?"

"Yes, we stopped to listen."

"And Mr. Lamleigh was enraptured," cried John. "He was in ecstasies."

"That is mamma's favorite," said Miss Eleanor, with a scarcely perceptible blush, at the thought, perhaps, of having charmed me with the magic of her voice. "I only know one verse of it—the last. Shall I sing it?"

"Yes."

Again that melodious voice floated out upon the evening air; again I listened spell-bound, until the last strain died away, and the singer's beautiful eyes were lifted to my face.

"You like it?"

"It is the sweetest thing I ever heard."

"Then I shall know what to sing to you in future."

Another song followed, and then another, and I might have stayed there all night, beside this "fresh piece of excellent witchcraft," if Fauchog had not hinted that it was getting late, and that it was time we were going.

Then I tore myself away, and went home, with Miss Eleanor's last and sweetest smile photographed on my heart.

"Well," said John, as we emerged into the moonlight once more, "said I not well? Is she not pretty and agreeable? and can't she sing like an angel?"

"I never heard one before to-night. She's perfectly charming, John, and I thank you for having introduced me. I believe I am in love already," I said.

"Young man, I fear thy blood is rosy red,  
Thy heart is soft."

"Yes, very soft to-night, John, and if it don't harden before to-morrow, Miss Eleanor will certainly make an indelible impression upon it, and I shall be obliged to enter the lists as the rival of Mr. Greggs."

"I hope you will. Good-night."

We had reached Mr. Farley's door.

"Good-night, John."

"Pleasant dreams."

I had horrible ones instead. I had hand-to-hand conflicts with Greggs all night long. No matter how many times I ran him through the heart, he was still as lively as ever. And Eleanor was always just beyond my reach,



while her aunt was persistently trying to pillow her head upon my breast, and her mother sat on a couch of crimson and gold, throwing kisses at me, and beckoning me to her side. But the night was over at last, and when

"Aurora, daughter of the dawn,  
Sprinkled with rosy light the dewy lawn,"

*I arose from my dream-haunted bed, and encasing these faultless limbs in my most becoming apparel, I descended to breakfast.*

A rather genteel looking personage, with brick-colored hair, worn thin in front, a pair of reddish eyes, a thin Roman nose, sharp pointed chin, embellished with bright yellow whiskers worn long, a small mouth adorned with a fine set of white, even teeth, and a complexion decidedly pinkish, was the first sight that greeted me as I entered the breakfast room.

The gentleman was standing by an open window, reading a newspaper, but he turned sharply about as I entered the room.

"Ha!" thought I, "that's Greggs."

Mrs. Farley introduced me. It was Greggs. I had made up my mind to hate him, and so I met his advances as coolly as an iceberg might meet the embraces of a boa constrictor.

"Are you going to the picnic, Mr. Greggs?" asked Mrs. Farley.

He hadn't heard that there was to be one. Had arrived home late the night before, and so had had no chance to hear anything. But he thought he should go.

I thought that he wouldn't.

We went out of the house together. He stopped at Mrs. Kendenwald's, and I went on to the office. Five minutes later he came rushing past my door. I knew, by the expression upon his countenance, that Miss Eleanor was engaged.

Vanderburg Lake is a small sheet of water, situated about two miles from the village. Fishermen and lovers delight to sail upon its placid bosom, and many of the latter have been cast away there. On its shore is a shady grove, fitted up expressly for the accommodation of picnic parties. It was in this grove and on this lake that we were to spend the day in eating, drinking, dancing, singing, sailing and making love, especially the latter.

I cannot tell you what a happy man I was, when, with sweet Eleanor beside me in the carriage, we started for the picnic. I've been biting the tip of my penholder for the last

half hour, trying to think of a few words sufficiently strong to express my feelings upon that blissful occasion. I was mad with joy —no, no, that won't do. That's putting it altogether too wild. We will say that I was as happy as I could be without cracking my cuticle. I like that better, don't you? It expresses a great deal, and yet it looks mild.

My dear reader, were you ever in love? I hope so. If you haven't been, I hope you will be soon, because I know you'll like it. I never was in love but once, and I was thirty-five years old at the time I fell. It happened while riding to Vanderburg Lake with sweet Eleanor. I didn't know what was the matter with me at first. When our eyes met, "a sudden rapture lived in every vein," and when her finger tips but touched my hand, a thrill of joy trembled through my bosom.

"And this is love?" I asked my heart. With one tremendous beat my heart said "yes."

With wonderful resignation I accepted my fate. Five minutes later we reached the grove, where we found the picnic party already assembled. Most of the young people of Vanderburg were there, the tables were spread neath the shade of the green-wood tree, and a score of rosy-checked damsels, with laughing eyes and fairy fingers, were flying about, adorning the tables with flowers. The scene was very beautiful, and the girls were ditto, but I cannot linger over either.

Fanchog met me as I walked away from the carriage, with Eleanor on my arm. Jennie was with him. The two darlings greeted each other with kisses, as darlings always do, and John whispered, "He's here!"

"Who?"

"Gregory Greggs."

Yes, there he was, but a short distance from us, staring at me "with eyes as red as new-kindled fire." Recognizing his rival he turned away and went to another part of the grove. A lady was with him.

"Why, who is that with Mr. Greggs?" asked Eleanor.

"That's Amelia Jones," answered Jennie. "Perhaps Gregory has transferred his affections."

At this moment the Vanderburg Quadrille Band struck up a toe-limbering air, and we hurried off to join the dancers.

What a happy day that was! and Eleanor was so lovely and so lively! And what joy it was for me to clasp her graceful anatomy,

as we danced to the music of the viol and the bassoon; and then at dinner to sit beside her, engaged in a work of devastation upon the good things spread before us; and better still, to sail with the loved one upon the blue waters of the lake, with the music of the dancers stealing over the waves and rippling around us; but better than all was the ride home under the stars (we rode under because we couldn't ride over—I should prefer the upper route), all alone with the sweet one, listening to the music of her voice, and her rippling laugh, and charmed by the witchery of her smiles, every glance of her bright eyes shooting through my heart. O, it was ecstatic!

When I had assisted her to alight at her own door, when the good-nights had been said, and I had driven away, it seemed as if I had left heaven behind me. That was my paradise, and Eleanor my Eve.

"Well, Lamleigh, how did you enjoy the picnic yesterday?" inquired Fanchog, when he came into my office the next morning.

"I never enjoyed anything better."

"All owing to the fascinating little woman that was with you, my dear fellow. Now Greggs didn't like it at all."

"How do you know?"

"I met him just now. And by the way, Lamleigh, if you are going to continue your attentions to Miss Eleanor Kendenwald—"

"I am."

"Well, then beware of Gregory Greggs." John said this so solemnly that I burst out laughing.

"Why, is he dangerous? Is he a shootist?"

"O no, but he'll try to annoy you, as well as Eleanor."

I smiled and went on with my writing. I had no fear of Gregory Greggs. I should have forgotten the existence of such a person had he not boarded in the same house with me. We met each other every day at meals, and he, instead of treating me coolly, as I might have expected from John's insinuations, exhibited a desire to cultivate my acquaintance, and the result was that we became very good friends indeed, to all outward appearance. Often, of an evening, he would drop into my office, for a social chat, and then we would walk home together; and sometimes he came into my room to sit and talk half an hour before retiring for the night, but never in my conversation with him was the name of Eleanor Kendenwald mentioned. Meantime I was a frequent visitor at Mrs.

Kendenwald's. Eleanor sang for me, and her mother and aunt both did all in their power to make the evenings that I spent at their house pass pleasantly, and it is hardly necessary to say that they succeeded. But through it all, it was hard to say which one of the three ladies I was the most attentive to. Of course, I tried to show my preference for Miss Eleanor, but I hardly think I did. I am sure a disinterested observer would have seen little or nothing in my conduct to have justified him in saying that I was more in love with one than another of this trio of agreeable ladies. I see now that it was so, though at the time I believed that every one saw that I was in love with Eleanor, and that I had neither eyes nor ears for any one else.

But we had no more picnics. Vanderburg was unusually quiet that summer, and I only saw Eleanor when I called at her house of an evening, and then, hardly ever alone.

And so the summer passed with little progress in my love-making. I felt that this could not last. I must "declare my intentions," but how? Should I ask for a private interview and then tell her that I loved her? that I wished to woo her and win her for my own? I couldn't do that, for though I am not easily abashed (did you ever hear of a lawyer that was?), I felt that I could never declare my love to the object of it—at least in person. As Cardenio says in *Don Quixote*, "The presence of a beloved object often so bewilders and confounds the faculties that the tongue cannot perform its office," and why should not love confound a lawyer's faculties as well as another man's?

"I will write to her," I said. "I shall not be afraid to commit my love to paper."

It was half past nine of an October evening when I made the above resolution. I was seated in my room alone. Drawing my chair to my desk, I arrayed my paper and commenced my first letter to Eleanor.

A knock at the door, and then before I could say "come in," Greggs entered the room.

"Ah, writing, eh? Then I won't disturb you."

"O, come in, Mr. Greggs."

"No, you can't talk and write too," he answered, closing the door behind him.

I wondered when he had gone if he had seen the heading of my letter. If he had, it was no wonder that he did not wish to stay.

Well, the letter was soon finished. I had signed my name, and was about to fold it,

When there was another knock at my door, "Come in."

It was Mr. Farley. I was wanted immediately. Old Mr. Johnson was very sick and the doctor didn't think he could live till morning. I was wanted to draw up his will. Leaving my letter on the desk, I hurriedly drew on my boots and coat, and snatching my hat, was soon on the road.

I returned an hour later, folded my letter, placed it in an envelop and superscribing it, I walked down to the post-office, and dropped it into the box. Then I went home and laid myself down in the hope of pleasant dreams. In a few hours more I should know my fate. Was it to call this sweet creature mine? I was fearful, yet I hoped.

I sent to the post-office a dozen times the next day, but I received no letter in answer to mine. The suspense was worse than a refusal.

Fanchog dropped in to see me that evening.

"I'm going home, John. Will you walk up with me?"

"Yes."

"Let us go around by the post-office."

"Very well."

The evening mail had just got in. There were two or three papers and a dozen letters for me. Putting them all in my pocket, I hurried home. John came up to my room with me.

"What is the matter with you to-night, Lamleigh? You seem to be excited about something," said John.

"Pshaw! it's only your imagination," I answered, throwing the letters and papers on the table.

John sat down and began to read the evening paper. I looked over my letters.

"Ha! here it is!" I said to myself. I tore it open and read it with feverish interest. It was accepted—she loved me. O joy!

"Sweet love! sweet lines! sweet life!

Here is her hand, the agent of her heart!

Here is her oath for love,"

I cried.

"What's the matter with you, Lamleigh?" inquired John, looking up in astonishment to see me dancing around the room with an open letter in my hand, pressing it to my lips one minute, and then folding it to my heart.

"She loves me!"

"Who?"

"Eleanor."

"O, I knew that long ago," John replied, calmly resuming his seat.

"I must go to her at once."

"Yes, I think you'd better go, either to Eleanor's or to a lunatic asylum."

I didn't heed him or his words. Taking my hat, I rushed out into the street, and hurried to Mrs. Kendenwald's door, impatient to clasp the beloved one to my breast. I didn't stop to ring, but marched boldly into the parlor. Miss Kendenwald, my Eleanor's maiden aunt, was sitting there alone. She rose when I entered and came towards me.

"O Lambard!" she cried, throwing herself into my arms.

"Ha, woman!" I gasped, recoiling.

"O, this is sweet!" she murmured, pillow-ing her head upon my breast. "Kiss me, Lambard."

Ladies and gentlemen, I was shocked, and I felt bad all over. I wanted to drop, but she wouldn't let me.

"Why don't you kiss me, Lambard?" she asked, puckering up her lips.

"Am I dreaming?" I yelled.

"O horrors! Mr. Lamleigh in my sister's arms!" exclaimed Mrs. Kendenwald, rushing into the room. "And you said that you loved me, only me. Are you a Mormon apostle?"

"No, no, I'm a poor weak man. Let me go, I—I aint well."

"Leave me? Never, darling. No, dearest Lambard. Pillow your head upon this faithful breast," said the maiden aunt, "and I will—"

"Away, base female!" I yelled. "I do not love thee."

"Then 'come rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,'" cried Mrs. Kendenwald, clasping me around the small of my back.

She pulled one way and the maiden aunt pulled the other.

"Ladies, dear ladies," I said, "do listen to me for one moment. There must be some mistake here."

"No, you said that you loved me," cried the maiden aunt. "You asked me to be your own little wife. O kiss me, Lambard!"

"Ha, ha, ha! What are you trying to do with Mr. Lamleigh?"

It was Eleanor's sweet voice, and she stood in the doorway laughing to see her mother and her aunt both embracing me.

"O Eleanor, save me from the women. They say that I have asked them to marry me. Show them my letter to you. Let them

know that I love you and you alone. Convince them that I am not a Mormon."

"A Mormon! O, you dear, ridiculous fellow," cried Nellie, wiping tears of merriment from her sweet blue eyes. "Here is the letter."

"And here is mine!" exclaimed Mrs. Kendenwald, releasing me, as she drew a letter from her bosom.

"And mine!" cried the maiden aunt, drawing it from its envelop, "is here."

"Why, they're alike!" said Eleanor, glancing hurriedly at the other two. "The same words, the same handwriting. Three proposals of marriage; three declarations of love! O Lambard! how could you do it? And—and I loved you so!" and dropping into a chair, she burst into tears.

"I only wrote one, dearest Eleanor, and that was to you," I said, falling on my knees at her feet.

"And you don't love me?" asked the maiden aunt.

"No." She went into hysterics.

"But who did write the other two?" cried Mrs. Kendenwald.

Nellie started up, and snatched the letter from her mother's hands.

"When did you write mine, Lambard?"

"Last night."

"And did any one see it? Did any one come into the room while you were writing?"

"Yes; Greggs."

"It is his writing!" she exclaimed. "He tried to counterfeit your hand, but I recognize some of the letters as his."

"You are right, Eleanor. I went out last evening after writing that, and was gone about an hour. In that time Greggs must

have copied the letter, and he sent one copy to your mother and one to your aunt."

"And I have made a fool of myself," said Mrs. Kendenwald, trying to laugh.

"And I—I've lost (sob) a husband, O, bohoo!" cried Aunt Eleanor.

"But you've found a nephew," I said, clasping the right Nellie to my breast.

"And it's a great deal better as it is," said Mrs. Kendenwald.

"If one can only think so. But I—I can't," and Aunt Eleanor hurriedly left the room.

Mrs. Kendenwald followed her soon after, and Nellie and I were left alone.

What time I left her side that night I do not remember, but it was very late, of course, as we had had a great deal to say, and it took us a great while to say it, for we used kisses for punctuation marks. But Eleanor had set the wedding day.

On the table, in my room, I found Mrs. Kendenwald's and Aunt Eleanor's letters. I returned them to their authors without opening, and I believe they were burned with the seals unbroken.

The next morning at breakfast, I asked for Mr. Greggs.

"Mr. Greggs! Why, he left town last night. He sold out his business more than a fortnight ago," answered Mrs. Farley.

"And he's chuckling to himself now," I thought; "but let him; they laugh that win, and I have won the dearest and best woman in the world."

My wife, looking over my shoulder (as wives always do at the end of a story), says that I've changed my mind about the above statement since we were married, but she is quite mistaken.

## HAUNTED!

—OR,—

### FLORENCE IVINGTON'S OATH.

BY MRS. MARY A. DENISON.

#### CHAPTER XII.

##### A VISITOR IN POP COURT.

THE room in Pop Court was changed, and so were its occupants. The walls rejoiced in a new bright paper—the cheapest, perhaps, that could be found in the city, but still it was neat and pretty. There were two little lounges, one at each front window, in the shape of boxes, ingeniously covered with bright calico. A new-old table stood between them, on which lay a neatly-folded cloth. There was not much else, save the new stove, or rather the second-hand stove, bought at some enterprising old iron-shop, but brought to an exceedingly bright polish by the skillful hands of Flor, who was now a pretty girl of sixteen, giving the promise of beauty at maturity.

Mrs. Walters, still Flor's bountiful lady, had not forgotten her vow. Neither had Flor forgotten hers. Deep on her heart the events of that night were engraved. She lived in anticipation of some time meeting the man who had outraged every better feeling of her nature, but she had never so much as hinted about it to Mrs. Walters; never so much as hinted of the dreary waste of waters, the wreck, and her salvation.

Mrs. Walters was developing her. She proved herself a child of no common powers, and the tender-hearted widow had interested a great many friends in her behalf, who were willing to bestow some time, some money. Meantime she had found a light and pretty employment that served "to keep the pot boiling," and pay the rent; so she was quite proud and happy to be the bread-winner, allowing the blind old fiddler to go out as usual, every day, under the escort of a chubby little boy, who rendered up his pennies faithfully.

Flor was also a proficient in music; her

kind friend had procured her a violin, upon which she played with more than ordinary skill.

To-night the young girl was looking forward to her seventeenth birthday, and the promise of a present from Mrs. Walters. The old man had not returned, and after setting out the table against his coming, Flor lighted a candle, pulled down the curtains, drew out her cherished music, a few pieces from Mrs. Walters's portfolio, and sat down to her music. She took such a childish delight in this practice, and looked such a charming little votary, that I know of more than one artist who would have been glad to sketch her as she sat. She played so well, too; throwing her whole soul into the performance.

She did not even hear the footsteps of some one approaching the door, or she might have thought grandpap was coming, the movement was so slow and undecided.

At last the latch clicked, a man entered, a tall handsome man, who stood with lines of annoyance visible on his forehead.

Flor had already thrown her violin down; now went quietly forward with a subdued, almost mortified expression.

"Ah! here you are, all right!" said a rich voice, the frown fading away. "I did not know as I should ever find you; this is the third domicile I have ransacked I believe."

"O Mr. Hurst! I—I never dreamed of your coming to find me."

"Didn't you? well, I hope I am none the less welcome, now I have come."

She cast a quick glance round the room, which he did not appear to see at all.

"I did not come as the bearer of very welcome news, I fear; Mrs. Walters sent me—to—"

"O! is she ill? has anything happened?"

"Don't be so hasty, little one," said Seymour Hurst, smiling; "no, she is not ill,

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but unfortunately she was called away to-day, so she commissioned me with some little budget for you, and there it is." He took a paper parcel from the pocket of his outside coat, and laid it down.

"She is very kind," said Flor, and the man wondered, as he had once or twice before, how she inherited that delicate beauty that seemed so out of place with her surroundings. He looked at her, moving across the room to deposit the parcel, the slender figure, the gleam of her dark hair, the exquisite purity of her complexion, and yet only as a connoisseur studies a lovely picture; this girl seemed so far beneath him, that he never deigned to bestow a thought on her, only as the recipient of Mrs. Walters's bounty. To-night other feelings were stirred—not of love, he had vowed in his soul that he never would love again one of the perfidious sex—but of pity. To what was she doomed, this slender child-woman, in whose face was the promise of so much soul-beauty? The care with which she had been invested through the bounty of her friend, seemed to him only to make her situation so much the more perilous. He thought of her only as lofty-minded men think of women who interest them. The pride of race, or rather of position, seemed to fall from him, as he saw this motherless and fatherless girl, battling for life among so many inferior associates.

"I hope you never go out alone at night," he said, earnestly.

"Never; Mrs. Walters cautioned me against that long ago. But indeed in this poor place they are all my friends; none of them would harm me; still I am very careful."

He smiled at her artlessness, but was grave again before she looked towards him.

"Don't let any one flatter you," he said, in a still graver tone.

"Flatter me?" she looked up in surprise; "no one ever attempted such a thing."

"Don't take it unkindly of me to say these things. I am a friend of Mrs. Walters, and almost old enough to be your father."

How the words made her heart leap, and sink, too.

"Nothing you do, as *her* friend, nothing she can possibly do will ever seem unkind to me," she said.

The pathos of her voice went to his heart.

"I thought I heard music, as I came up," he said, carelessly.

Flor blushed and smiled.

"It was only me, sawing a little," she replied.

"Sawing a little! I should think so. Why, you don't mean to say you play this sonata?"

"I manage to get through with it sometimes," said Flor, modestly.

"Well, well, you are wonderfully advanced, that's all I have to say. Who taught you?"

"Gran'paw."

He lifted the little instrument, carried it to its position under his chin, and began playing, and how delicately he brought the finer tones out! how rich seemed the voice that sang along the sweet harmonies!

"And you, too, play! but O, so beautifully!" exclaimed Flor, her glorious eyes kindling.

Another moment, the door opened, and admitted the old blind fiddler, followed by a child, not over clean, with a bag full of pennies clinking in his hands.

Flor blushed; Seymour Hurst turned a sudden crimson, bit his lip, placed the violin on the table, and the instant composure of his manner was colder and haughtier than Flor had ever seen.

"He is ashamed," thought Flor, "ashamed of having been caught in this poor place by a blind man. Well, he needn't have come—I don't wonder, though—yes I do; he needn't have shown his mortification so plainly!"

"Who has'ee here, Flor?" asked the old man, the calm dignity of whose countenance it would be hard to parallel in the circles of the *elite*.

"A kind friend, gran'paw, and a friend of Mrs. Walters."

"Ah! God bless her!" cried the old man, "ees a good girl, Flor, she's a good child, sir, though none of mine."

"Hush, gran'paw!" cried Flor, warningly. "I am yours—I belong to you, you know I do."

"Well, well, have it your own way, child; I saved her from the seas, sir, and she will love the old man for it—O, but it was such a fight for life."

"My errand is not quite finished," said Seymour, who had been buttoning up his overcoat; "you have seen Mr. Weasing, perhaps?" to Flor.

"Yes sir, at Mrs. Walters's."

"He is about to work on a new piece of statuary, and declares he can find no model for the principal figure. I thought of you, and as he pays liberally, and you have nothing to do but to stand a few moments at a time, I presumed you would not object to the task. Wessing is a good man, as well as an artist, and my brother-in-law. Mrs. Walters also told him she thought you would not object."

"O! if she said that, of course I will go. And I shall see his studio, perhaps, and all the beautiful statuary that she has told me about."

"Yes, you will be in the studio, of course. He may want you for several weeks, once a day, and will give you a dollar an hour, if that will pay you for your time and trouble."

"Indeed it will," murmured Flor, who thought how much a dollar a day might amount to in several weeks, with a flush of gratitude. The child had a little private hoard of her own, which she was saving for a particular object, one that she had set her heart on, and Mrs. Walters was aiding her to swell her treasure. There was an institution in which the aged were cared for, not grudgingly, nor made to feel like paupers, by the payment of one or two hundred dollars. Old grandpapa had all his life, since his last misfortune, expressed at times a desire to enter this retreat. It was hardly safe for him to be out in the streets now, he was too old.

"Then he may count upon your coming next Monday, I may say; Mrs. Walters has partly promised to be there."

Flor clasped her hands in silent ecstasy. This beautiful woman had earned a niche in her heart as its patron saint. Flor's love for her was but little short of idolatry.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE PARAGRAPH IN THE PAPER.

"Mr. Seymour Hurst, promenading in this beggarly place!" soliloquized Flor's visitor, as he drew his muffler over his ears to shut out the sound of the oaths and ribald language that saluted them on his leaving the house.

"Beg pard'n; s'ol man home?" queried a drunken voice, as he stepped from the

last rickety board that made pretence of holding on to the door.

"Get out, you drunken beast!" exclaimed Hurst, intensely disgusted.

"Drun' beast, y'rself—I'm no drun' beast—I'm 'spec'le man—goin' see Miss Flor—rup there. S' nice girl is Flor—an'—I'm goin' to—marry her—I am; let you know—'spec'l man s' you are—'spec'bler."

"Phoh! and such people visit her, that pretty *spirituelle* girl!" muttered Seymour, his lip curling as he trudged along the sloppy treacherous thoroughfare; "such contamination, moral and physical besets her from morning till night, and from night till morning. Well for her if some honest man can love and marry her, though she can hardly be expected to rise much above the level of the horde in this miserable place—unless—her genius—she certainly has genius—should help her carve her way out. But what hope is there of that? One might interest some musician in her fate, yet they are many of them unfit for the training of a young beautiful—yes, she is beautiful—girl."

Now and then a staggering figure passed him, dim in the semi-darkness; sometimes the bent form of a woman hugging a tattered shawl closer to her forlorn bosom; sometimes children shouting in blasphemous mirth, smoking like veterans, their shrill voices starved and beaten perhaps into attenuation like their bodies. Seymour hastened his steps.

"You'll never catch me in this locality again," he muttered, drawing a long breath, as he turned the corner. "It's lucky that drunken wretch didn't come up stairs while I was there; I'd have kicked him down. It's nothing to me, though, who visits the girl; only for her own sake I could wish she lived in a more respectable place."

He might have been better pleased than he chose to tell, if he had known that the tipsy Dutch-bottle felt his way up the miserable stairs to the outside door, only to knock and push at it till he was tired, Flor having detected his drunken step, and locked it securely, then blown out the light.

As it was, he wended his way in a mood for which he could not account, to a handsome street, where the houses were all respectable, and the very lights streaming through the rich curtains, proclaimed the

habitude of luxury, and the quiet of aristocratic repose. Even to the pavements, cleanly swept, the amber richness of the steady household flame penetrated, giving a cheerful reminder of the pleasures of home to the weary traveller.

And weary Seymour Hurst assuredly was, having assumed the responsibility of a daily newspaper, and, as the recipient of a magnificent salary, taking his cares upon him none too lightly.

He stopped before a very handsome flight of steps, and ascending them, applied his nightkey. The house was kept by a Madame Worth, the widow of a naval officer, a dignified and exceedingly elegant woman, and none but the very best might hope to gain access to private apartments in her house.

Seymour was one of the favored ones; he not only had one of the very best rooms in the house, but often took his meals at the same table with Madame Worth, and her exceedingly well-preserved and exceedingly dignified maiden sister, who was very sedulous, as was only natural, in attending minutely to all Mr. Hurst's wants, and investing that care, as she supposed, with an impalpable and peculiar charm.

Mr. Hurst's room was on the second story, a large handsome apartment, that held ever so many memories of departed grandeur; of noble dames moving to and fro in hoops no modern invention can hope to rival, and powdered locks done up in stately spires, to which fashion our belles are fast approximating, so that we may see a St. Peter's dome yet erected on the temples of some fair damsel, whose slender body is totally inadequate to the responsibility. Some thoughtful hand had lighted the gas, though the light was subdued. Seymour turned it up, after he had thrown off his greatcoat; it revealed an interior almost as splendid and fantastic as a room in the Arabian Nights. The floor was laid with polished boards; here and there a Persian rug was placed, brilliant with all the colors of the Orient. No two chairs were alike in color or style—some were brilliant crimson, others green, others blue, and yet the incongruities did not strike the eye unpleasantly, they were so well arranged.

"If there is anything I abominate," Hurst had said one day to his brother-in-law, "it is this custom of duplicating

every separate article of furniture your neighbor has. Suppose the Almighty had made us all after one pattern, stamped every face with the same initials, incapable of variation. Can you imagine what a world it would be? The monotony would drive men mad, and they would go to disfiguring their faces, by way of originating a variety. If ever I have a home, you'll not find me following the universal model."

A small cabinet filled with unmistakable curiosities, stood on a low marble lion at one end of the room, and in the brightness of the ruddy coal fire lying dreaming, and snapping in its sleep, the lion's face took an almost living character.

Seymour threw himself on a broad easy-chair beside his study-table, in the centre of which reposed a group of marvellous beauty, Wessing's "Faith, Hope and Charity."

"Upon my soul, the prettiest face there is strikingly like that girl's!" cried Seymour to himself, starting forward, and gazing critically at the marble wonder. He looked at it from every point, gravely, as a man who was making a serious decision.

"How in the world did Wessing contrive to introduce her features? Ha! the very man of all others!" he cried, as a thin spare man, dark and somewhat melancholy of countenance, presently entered.

"What! were you looking for me?" asked the latter, smiling.

"No, but thinking of you. Take a seat. Mary is well, I hope?"

The sculptor seated himself comfortably in a chair much lower than Hurst's.

"I was just wondering where you got that face from," Seymour said, pointing to the figure of Hope.

"O, that! why, from a sort of a wandering mendicant, I suppose—a little girl who used to play the tambourine at the Great Western. She had as sweet a little face as I ever saw, and a noble old blind fiddler with her."

"That's the very one," said Seymour. "I thought so."

"The very one! why, I had forgotten the child. She may be dead now, for all I know, poor little thing!" said Wessing. "But I stopped in to read your paper. It must be very smart—all gone at the stand—couldn't get one for love nor money."

Seymour Hurst handed it to him, yet damp and fresh-smelling.



"That child is still alive, though," said Seymour, as he resumed his reclining posture; "possibly you don't remember having seen her at our friend Mrs. Walters's?"

"No, indeed, I don't," replied Wessing, a little surprised.

"But she saw you; it is the same child Mrs. Walters took such a fancy to, and said what an admirable figure she would make for your next group."

"Ah! I remember; I wonder if I could get her?"

"Yes; she has promised to come next Monday. I took the responsibility to engage her."

"Good! but I am keeping the paper from you."

"No, no, read on. I don't care about it. I seldom read anything of my own after sending back the proof."

"It's a capital number," said Wessing, laying it on the table when he had finished, and selected another from a miscellaneous pile, while Seymour languidly reached for the one he had put down, and as languidly let his eye rove from column to column.

Suddenly he started forward; so suddenly that the table reeled, and Wessing's head came up with a frightened "God bless me!"

"What's the matter, Hurst? you're as white as a corpse!" he exclaimed, seeing the altered face of his friend.

"I—I came across a—paragraph," said the other, in a slow solemn voice, "that has shaken me a good deal, I must say."

"Ah!" And Wessing still looked at him covertly, seeing that the excitement was something unusual.

"Yes, quite shaken me; I wouldn't have believed anything would have done it—that is—it is a death," he added, after these disjointed sentences. "You know Harry Collins? It is his sister."

"God bless my soul!" cried the sculptor, whose honest pleasant face became quite statuesque on the moment, and who understood now the reason for this strange excitement.

"Found dead in her bed," said Seymour, his brows contracting; "don't doubt he killed her," he added, between shut teeth.

"Dear! dear! and she was such a pretty creature! quite a pretty creature. It is shocking."

The clock struck eight.

"Mary will wonder what keeps me," said Wessing, rising, sombrely, and proceeding to let himself into the greatcoat he had divested himself of on entering. "Well, I'm sure, quite unpleasant news—quite so!"

"I've been expecting it," said Seymour, gloomily.

"You don't say so?" And Wessing made a statue of himself in a heroic attitude, as he turned in surprise, one arm impeded by the loose lining of his coat-sleeve.

"I knew he'd break her heart, or end her some way," said Seymour, bitterly. "Why was it, I wonder, that I hated that man from the beginning? and what could she see in his cruel blue eyes that fascinated her so? Serpent's beauty, I suppose. It has always been that women were snared by these cold-hearted villains. If I had been her brother, by the Lord Harry, I'd sooner have followed her to her grave, than have seen her the wife of that man."

"You knew him, then?"

"I knew him. I had met him several times before we spoke together, and from the first I looked upon him as something evil, as a man ready to take advantage of his kind; a mean, cringing, bullying despot. I shall always think he frightened the girl into accepting him, though Heaven knows what means he used. She seemed to me like one whose will was paralyzed—but what senseless folly I am talking! She is in heaven, thank God! though whether sent there by fair means or foul, there may indeed never be an opportunity of knowing."

"Come home with me, Hurst; Mary would be glad to see you," said Wessing, with something like pity in his voice.

"No, I thank you; I'm not fit to-night—besides, I've oceans to write. I'll see you on Monday."

"Good-night, old fellow; take care of yourself, then." And Wessing clasped his hand warmly, and was gone.

Seymour did not set himself down to write. A little maid tapped at his door with refreshments, placed them on the table, and hurried out. She felt an instinctive fear of the face, usually full of thought, but now dark and gloomy. The viands remained untasted, the tea breathed itself cold. Seymour Hurst walked back

and forth, the paper rattling in the hands that were crossed behind him.

"Poor thing! poor little thing! There she lies, stone-cold in one of the chambers of that horrible haunted Willoway. It must have seemed like walking over a tomb under those melancholy trees—it always did to me—poor little thing! I wonder if she loved him?—I wonder if she did? Well, well—whoever she loved, it's all the same now—she neither loves nor suffers. It was very sudden, though, that change; it always seemed a sudden and mysterious thing to me. And Hal he blundered so, trying to excuse it. He was ashamed of her—couldn't look me in the eye. He *had* considered it a settled thing, he said, knew his father did; but he made such a fool of himself with his attempted condolence, that I had to beg him to stop it. Since then we've not been such friends. I don't know why, but some way it's impossible, utterly impossible. I'd avoid him if I could, and I know he avoids me. He's changed, too, in this time. There was a rumor that he was going to marry Miss Rahl, the banker's daughter, but it never came off. He looks like a disappointed man—there are gray hairs sprinkled all over his head. I saw them myself the last time we met, and what a constrained meeting it was! Poor thing! poor little thing! lying dead in one of those desolate rooms. The last time I heard directly from her, she had one little girl—deformed, I think they said. That was three years ago."

He threw himself down, folded the paper, absently, and laid it before him. Laid it before him, but his eyes were riveted upon it still.

"Hal! another surprise." And he caught up the paper again. "For sale, a neat cottage—the property well situated—contiguous to the beautiful grounds of Willoway. At auction, too; there's some of that devil's work, I know. Yes, there's his name—and this must have been in the paper for a week, at least. What does it mean? It belonged to the widow—was mortgaged to a small amount—Harry might easily have paid it. I see—he has got it in his hands, that thief, and—I had almost called him murderer. I must see about this; the sale is for the twentieth—next week; I'll be there, and if human means can compass it, I'll buy the place myself. It's just what Wessing wants—Mary, too.

They shall live there, and I'll make it my summer retreat. Poor thing! It seems almost a relief, though, to know that she is dead. That fellow was capable of any subtle secret villany—God forgive me—but I thought it of him from the first."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT THE STUDIO.

WHAT a beautiful day it was! Flor ran blithely down from her domicile in Pop Court, and inhaled the keen, cold, glorious life-giving air, with a sensation of unbounded delight.

Eleven o'clock, Mr. Hurst had said, and it was half past ten now. There would be plenty of time with brisk walking.

Grandpap had the rheumatism, and had declined to go out, so for fear she should not be back in time, Flor had set the table with bread and cold meat, that he might help himself when he felt hungry.

She looked very pretty, this Flor, her little hood of white and blue wool setting off the extreme delicacy of her complexion—pretty enough for something beside the wind to kiss, but the few rude fellows lingering about the precincts of the court never dared so much as to try to look her out of countenance. Princess she was to them, with her dainty step and modest ways, as veritably as though she had been born in a palace, and cradled in luxury all her days. Some of the inmates of the old place yet styled her the ragged princess of Pop Court; but only the vicious, envious of her goodness and beauty.

Grandpap was never unhappy, left by himself. The neighbors would sometimes crowd round the door—particularly the children, a motley crew, drawn by the sweet sounds of the little cracked fiddle, cracked and glued again, and made in tone a thousand times sweeter for that, the old man said; but the door was always locked when Flor was away, while he sat in the sunshine and played, gems from the old masters dropping from the charmed bow, and trembling in sweet music under the long quivering fingers, while the sightless eyes raised heavenward, seemed to see the spirit of harmony he invoked. The poor old blind beggar had a history, but it is needless to enter into its particulars now. Enough to say, that out of shame and

degradation born of excesses in a lusty youth, that wanted for no luxuries, he had come up purified, though with the loss of sight, and of every earthly good. And he was reconciled, and at times happy; certainly very happy in the undeserved love of his little Flor, who seemed to him yet only a child.

And Flor went on, breathing freer, walking with a lighter step, as she emerged from court and alley, from harsh sounds and noisome smells; from the sight of women whose faces pained her; from the sight of children who seemed to her like the wicked changelings old Mitty Morgan used to tell her about in the fairy stories—poor Mitty was dead. She breathed freer as she saw how much more lovingly the sun seemed to shine on things clean and delicate, and gave full scope to the æsthetic, artistic sense of the beautiful which seemed to envelop her whenever she lost sight of her old surroundings. And she was going to such a glorious place, she knew it must be, for, listening unseen, she had heard the great artist talk of his work, and his studio, with all the simple pleasure of a child.

Could that be the place? How very dazzling the sun made the great marble pillars! how it gleamed and glittered over the silver plates, and laid along the wide hall, as Flor timidly entered, and read on one of the side signs, "L. Wessing, Studio No. 140."

Up stairs, through another hall, where the windows of stained glass let in the hues of the rainbow, till even the very motes were like diamond dust, and there, the first number that met her eye, in large figures on ground glass, was 140.

Flor trembled a little, shivered with mingled awe and delight as she stood there, hearing voices within. The door yielded to her touch, and swung open, revealing only a large screen, and beside it a tall foreign-looking gentleman, his hat in his hand, and a great cape to his cloak, talking with energy. Two or more voices sounded behind the screen, a dull scraping noise proceeded from the other end of the apartment. Flor caught glimpses of rich velvet backgrounds here and there, fringed and tasselled, and the exquisitely modelled shape of a child, just visible behind the black cloak of the speaker.

She stood there, not knowing what to

do. Presently the visitor turned, and in the act of putting on his hat, started at the sight of her. Flor felt there was something peculiar, though nothing impertinent, in his steady glance, his curious rapid study of her face, feature by feature. Once he appeared as if about to speak, but he seemed of a sudden to recover himself, and hurried from the room.

"That must be the brother Mrs. Walters has talked so much about," some one said, as Flor now ventured to go beyond the screen.

"Ah! here is our young friend!" Wessing exclaimed, looking up from a small plaster-cast he held in his hand. A gentleman who stood at the window turned; it was Seymour Hurst, whose face lighted up with one of his rare smiles. Flor looked so pretty, so innocent, standing there—like some exquisite picture, he thought.

O beautiful place! Flor almost held her breath as she gazed from point to point. The few rich paintings under velvet canopies; the perfect arrangement of those milk-white statues, standing as if, like her, struck breathless with astonishment and delight. She hardly noticed Hurst, though he explained some of the pictures to her, there was such a glory, such a radiance almost divine in all this wondrous and beautiful combination.

"You must be such a happy man!" she dared to say, turning to the sculptor.

"O, very happy!" he said, simply, "when my efforts give so much pleasure as they seem to afford you."

He was perhaps tired with the lipping praise of languid beauties, and this artless worship and wonder gave him a sensation both new and pleasant.

"I am going, Wessing—good-morning, Miss Flor," said Seymour.

"Good-morning," Flor responded, hastily, and as if she had quite overlooked his presence. He lingered a moment to see if she had a look for him, but she had forgotten him again, and away he went.

Day after day Flor spent an hour or two in the studio. Sometimes the sculptor's "Mary" was there, with a lovely little babe; sometimes Seymour Hurst, who looked very absent and very dark indeed, and scarcely seemed to notice Mrs. Walters's protegee; sometimes two or three brother artists would call in.

One day a stranger came in with Hurst.

a slight dashing young man, with hair and beard as black as night, fiery but handsome eyes, and a reckless expression of countenance. He stood some time overlooking Flor, before she perceived him.

"Egad! but that's a pretty girl," he whispered to Hurst.

"Yes, and good as pretty," was the quiet reply.

"Any relative of—" he nodded his head towards Wessing.

"O no! she's a girl Mrs. Walters picked up, some time ago, and made a good deal of," replied Hurst, glancing at the young man's face, uneasily.

"What a grand creature for my Myriam!"

"Pshaw! you want a woman forty years old for that, or at least thirty."

"No, I want that face particularly. Don't you see what splendid possibilities there are in it? But you're not used to reading faces, as I am. Why, man, a few years will make her a magnificent woman. I wouldn't like to wrong her."

"No—it wouldn't do for any one I know, to wrong her," said Hurst.

"How chivalrous! But what of her? where is she—who is she? You needn't be so chary of your knowledge. I tell you that girl could defend herself, timid and innocent as she looks. Such a union of strength and weakness I never saw in a human countenance before. I should like to call out its power. Don't be so uneasy, Hurst, you're not going to marry the girl, are you?"

"Marry a beggar!" muttered Seymour.

"No, of course not, nor any one else. You and I are sworn old bachelors. But seriously, if the girl is poor, I'll make it worth her while to sit for me."

"I don't know about exhibiting her round in this manner."

"Nonsense; you wouldn't know the face when I had finished it. I intend to throw in more fire, more fervor; give it the lines of thought and maturity; dark passionate eyes, instead of those meek hazel ones; it is the Jewish contour I want, the style of the face, not the face itself. And yet I'll engage to make something she will remember five years from now."

"What nonsense!" laughed Hurst.

"I'd wager you the price of my last picture on the certainty. But is she almost done with Wessing?"

"I think this is her last day."

"And I'm to commence to-morrow. O, I must have her, there's no getting round it. I couldn't find one such face in a thousand for Myriam: Will you propose it to her?"

"No, I want nothing to do with it. I am not her guardian," replied Hurst, turning from the handsome reckless face as he spoke. "Of course she wants money, as every one else does, and she is old enough to take care of herself, I should hope."

Just then Flor was disengaged. Hurst bowed coldly.

"Have you heard from my—Mrs. Walters?" Flor asked, anxiously. The lady had been very ill.

"She is not well yet," said Hurst, sententially; "her brother is going to take her to Italy with him."

Flor grew pale, and clung to the chair.

"Then—I shall not see her—again," she said, faintly.

"Not for some time, at all events," returned Seymour, not looking towards her. Little he knew how the news struck death-cold at her heart. Meantime Hummel, the painter, had gained Wessing's side.

"Introduce me," he said, "I should like to have her sit for me."

"Well now, that is good," was the naïve reply. "Really, I am glad, she's a nice little thing—very pretty, and very poor."

So the artist was introduced, at which Seymour Hurst seemed to take umbrage, for he gave one hasty glance round the office, and hurried out.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BLJOU OF A ROOM.

WHILE it was a novelty Flor liked it. But there came a time when it was almost unendurable to sit there, under the battery of those powerful eyes. Not that Flor was attracted or charmed by them in the least, handsome as they were—handsome as the whole face undeniably was. The picture took such a long weary time! Besides, the studio was small, and as Hummel painted rapidly, and sold his pictures very soon, as fast as they were done, in fact, for Hummel was the fashion, it was curious that this one should be yet unfinished. Flor wearied of the fashionable items she was obliged to listen to, as one and another of

his friends dropped in; she wearied of his caressing voice, and wondered if he always talked so to women when alone with them.

She longed to see Hurst, longed to hear some tidings of Mrs. Walters—her heart was sick and hungry for tidings from her. She wished that brother who had been away so many years had never come back, and scolded herself for wishing such an ungrateful thing. Then she began to wonder if Seymour Hurst had not liked Mrs. Walters too well for his peace. She was so beautiful! how could he help it? she asked herself. She very seldom thought of such things at all, but the close questions of the old man had put it in her mind.

This studio was not in the least like Westing's. It was small, and Hummel had untidy habits, so that it seldom looked as neat as it might. The pictures hung against bare white walls, unrelieved by soft and costly hangings; the windows were allowed to accumulate dust, till sometimes their surface was obscured, and Flor longed to get at them with towel and water. But Hummel, himself, the ladies pronounced exquisite. He looked, they said, every whit the artist. No one could have mistaken his occupation—and then he painted such aristocratic pictures! But strange to say, Flor did not like him; sometimes there was a sort of dread mingled with her dislike; sometimes she counted the cobwebs in the corners, while he was talking behind his easel; she grew very tired, and all the time was secretly uneasy and unhappy, more so than she had ever been in her life before. It looked now as if it might be years before the old man could be placed in the asylum for whose shelter he craved so earnestly. He was not so well as he had been—required stimulants and embrocations, and much of Flor's time, which she gave ungrudgingly.

"Now, Miss Flor, the bright expression, please," said Hummel, with that disagreeable singing voice.

"I don't feel bright," his subject responded, languidly.

Hummel smiled meaningly, smirked, and twirled his mustache.

"Don't feel bright, eh? What shall I do to make you feel bright?"

"Nothing," said Flor, quickly.

"What shall I say? shall I tell you a story?"

Flor shook her head, impatiently.

"I whistle to my little pet bird, sometimes, when he gets low-spirited," said Hummel, gayly. "I wish you were a little pet bird, you should have such a lovely cage of pure gold."

Flor was silent now—half ready to laugh at what she considered his silliness, half indignant. He peeped over the easel at her, and then round the sides, till she did laugh, in spite of herself.

"I think I know what will make her bright," at last he said, rising.

Flor watched him, growing timid, as he went to a recess in another part of the room. Presently he returned with a costly and elegant guitar. He had thrown on a bright-hued dressing-gown in the place of the old painting-blouse; on his head sat jauntily a cap of velvet, inwrought with silver stars, and the glitter of silver tassels set off his swarthy beauty.

Surprised, half fascinated, Flor's eyes followed all his movements, as he threw himself on a cushion near her, saying:

"I am about to sing for you a little Moorish serenade, one I translated last night," and in a rich voice he commenced:

"Love calleth,  
Moonlight falleth,  
Flowers glisten,  
Rivers listen,

And the earth—the round old earth,  
Jolly grows with life and mirth,  
Come, my love, and listen.

"Day cometh,  
Bee hummeth,  
Sun falleth,  
Bird calleth,

And the earth—the round old earth,  
Jolly grows with light and mirth,  
Go, my love, 'tis morning."

"There! what do you say to that? Are you brighter?"

"How well you sing!" was her answer.

"Thank you; praise from you is something to be thankful for, to be proud of."

Flor flushed; she wanted to tell him she thought this sheer flattery, but did not know how. She wondered if he would treat those highbred fashionable young ladies as he did her.

"No," he might have truthfully answered, they did not inspire him with one-tenth the interest that she did.

The weary look and manner returned.

"Now really, my dear,"—Flor winced at this, unsuspecting and childish as she was, in most things—"I must have you more

cheerful than this. What has occurred to ruffle the serenity of your spirit? Have I kept you too long?"

"I am tired," said Flor, despondingly.

"Ah! that should not be. Do you know I've the divinest pair of eyes in the world, here—and yet they are your eyes."

"I suppose you have improved upon mine," said Flor, simply.

"Well—not much. To be candid, they could not be improved, that is, in the human head, my child; but for this swarthy Jewess, they needed to be intensified, and I've really got a pair of splendid eyes, terribly splendid. Do you know I'm half afraid of them?" This was while he was coquetting with his brush.

Flor, receiving all he said as gospel truth, bent forward. He attempted to draw her nearer, but her womanly instinct resented the touch. She drew herself up, and stood back out of his way, and then was instantly ashamed of herself, as she saw that he took no notice whatever, but began coolly to point out beauties and defects. As soon as he was through, and looked up at her, she shrank again, for the wealth of the Indies she could not tell why, only his easy man-of-the-world assurance daunted her, and he always looked at her so long and fixedly—almost always till her cheek began to glow, which little circumstance he attributed favorably for himself.

"My child, you do look fatigued," he said, suddenly rising, and putting aside his work. "Do you know I am a bit secretive, and tell but very few of my friends what a *bijou* of a little parlor I have beyond this." He threw open the door of a rosewood press that stood between the closet and a window, and for one moment Flor stood transfixed.

Beyond that narrow passage, glowed like a jewel, one of the tiniest, most fairylike enclosures the child had ever seen or dreamed of. A little room all permeated

with the rich rose light, coming in from one painted window; the walls crimson, studded with golden bees, the floor a garden-bed of roses; the little table in the centre, glittering with cut glass and silver, the chandelier one small swaying mass of brilliants, everything so bewildering, so beautiful, so unlooked-for, that the girl stood there, holding her breath.

"Only my very choicest friends are admitted," he said, enjoying her surprise and delight; "and you are so worn out, a glass of wine and a biscuit will refresh you."

"Do you mean—do you wish me to go in there? Is it real?"

"You can soon assure yourself," he said, with a smile that gave warning where none was meant. "Come, you shall play that you are my little princess for a while. I will be the slave that waits upon you."

"How did you ever know they called me princess?" Flor asked, the angry blood rushing to her cheek. That one word had revealed all the miseries of her life—all the degrading realities of Pop Court.

"Surely I never knew it," he said, in some surprise. "Who are *they*?"

"It don't matter," said Flor, coldly. "I think I will go home, Mr. Hummel."

"And refuse my offer of refreshment?"

"I don't need any refreshment. I am not hungry, I am not thirsty. I shall feel better out—out in the air."

He closed the door quietly; a cloud passed over his face, but was gone when he looked up, and in the most natural manner assented that likely it was the air she wanted.

"You will come to-morrow," he said, as she went towards the door. "I have almost finished."

"Yes—do you think it will take many more sittings?"

"Two or three, perhaps," he answered; "not more," and he bowed her out.

[CONCLUDED IN NEXT NUMBER.]

## HAUNTED !

—OR,—

### FLORENCE IVINGTON'S OATH.

BY MRS. MARY A. DENISON.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### A GHOST IN EDEN LODGE.

GOING moodily back to the picture, he stood there, his brows bent, his eyes fixed, though evidently they saw nothing. The dark beauty of Myriam was not in his thought. The lofty brow of the Jewess had no charm for him.

Then he spoke, slowly, clearly, with almost painful deliberation:

"I wish to heaven I had never seen that girl!"

He took the brush up, touched some part of the unfinished face.

"If I could blot it out as easily as I might this!" he muttered again, in the same measured voice. "What winning grace! what delicacy and refinement! Her nature is rich in all the qualities of pure womanhood. Shall I—" The question was never spoken. At that moment Seymour Hurst came in.

"Well, you *are* a stranger!" cried Hummel.

"Miss Flor is gone, then?" said Seymour, after shaking hands.

"Ah! she was the attraction!"

"I—had a letter for her from Mrs. Walters, and hoped to find her here."

"You might have met her; she has been gone less than five minutes."

"That's strange—yes. I wonder I did not. But as I am to place the missive in her hands, I'll call to-morrow. O, by the way, how do you get on with the picture?"

"Famously," said Hummel, turning it to the light.

"Not much of Flor in that. She's a handsomer and grander creature than that little thing will ever be."

"That's a mistake of yours; wait a year or two," said Hummel, lounging back, his hands in his pockets. "There's the chance of a splendid woman in that girl, if—"

"Why do you stop?" queried Seymour, a little paler.

"If she isn't spoiled," was the reply, in a lower voice.

"But what, pray—who should spoil her?"

"O, that's a question of your own asking," returned the painter, carelessly.

"I—don't exactly feel safe. I believe I will advise her to have nothing more to do with these sittings, after your 'Myriam' is finished."

"Vastly pretty compliment to me!" said Hummel, turning round with a flushed face.

"There are men in your profession, Hummel, whom you would not trust yourself, under similar circumstances. The girl is an orphan—she has scarcely a friend in the world; she is pretty—more than pretty—graceful, intelligent, and her powers have been somewhat cultivated. Add to this, that she possibly knows she is beautiful—that she meets, sometimes, with women who shine in fine feathers, with half her good looks—is there not a possibility that a given temptation might, in one in her unprotected state, needing counsellors and friendly guidance, and almost absolutely without either, as she is, might overcome her resolution—and—I'll stop there. The picture is too terrible to contemplate. I love virtue, and purity, and goodness—I was trained to it, thank God! but there are men I once held in high esteem, and have taken by the hand, to whom I would no more speak than I would take a serpent and hold his fangs to my throat."

"Yes, there are bad men in all professions, Hurst," said Hummel, to whom this conversation was somewhat wearisome. "But to change the subject, what's this I hear you've been doing—purchasing property out in Berylton? Why, I seriously thought of getting that little place myself."

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Ivington, close by, is an old friend of mine."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and to let you into a secret, this 'Myriam' is for him. I'm afraid he's not going to like it, though."

"Ah!"

"Why, bless me, how curt you can be with your 'indeeds!' and 'ahs!' Do you know Ivington?"

"Yes, I know him," said Hurst, not quite concealing the blended harshness and irony with which he spoke.

"You do—O! I wasn't aware."

"What objection has he to the picture?" asked Hurst.

"Why, he seemed to like it well enough, till I reminded him of a little incident that happened years ago—six or seven, perhaps more. I was saying to him the other day, 'Ivington, you remember that little brat with the blind fiddler, at the hotel up town, who hung on to you so lovingly? The man turned as white as a ghost. It was a queer incident. I was going off that night, and, to tell the truth, he had lent me a little money on some of my best pictures—he was on the eve of furnishing his house then—and we had just come out of the dining-room, when this little creature ran up to him, and began calling him by name, and asking him if he knew her, and all that sort of thing.'"

"Are you sure it was the child with a blind old fiddler?" asked Seymour.

"I'm sure the girl was with an old blind fiddler—a ragged little thing. What a clank her tambourine made when she threw it down! Altogether, it was a rich scene. So, as I say, I told him this girl resembled that child, and he turned as white as a sheet. I always thought there was some mystery about that. Did you know he had buried his wife?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply. "Have you ever heard anything about this Flor's connections or friends?"

"Not a word. Sometimes she speaks of an old grandfather, and I take it, from what you said, she's an orphan."

"Do you know where she lives?"

"No—where does she? She will never let on to me."

"I think it is somewhere in the lower part of the city. I forget where—that is, the name of the place. It's not of any consequence, however. You and I do not visit such haunts."

"O, of course not—not the least consequence," echoed Hummel.

"He'll take the picture, I suppose?"

"He ordered it," said the painter, sentimentally; "and I'm not going to change Myriam, either, to please him. It pleases me too well," he added, with an admiring look that made Hurst uneasy. "I'd paint another, first. By the way, he's got a splendid place there, hasn't he—Wil-loway?"

"Some think it so."

"You'll have him for a neighbor."

"We shall be as distant as the antipodes," replied Hurst, setting his teeth.

"Oho!" And Hummel busied himself about some trifle, adding, in an aside, "If Satan is handsome, he looks like Hurst, when Hurst is in one of his moods."

Hurst had bought Eden Lodge. In fact, in his first triumph of proprietorship, he had been strangely startled, by seeing in one of the empty rooms, the figure of Angy, as he thought, leaning against a window. Nor did he quite lose the strange deathlike faintness that had come over him when the figure turned, disclosing a face like, yet unlike, that of the woman he had loved. A fairer face—that of her sister, whom he had not seen for years.

"O Mr. Hurst!" she cried, with a little scream. "How strange to see you here! O poor Angy!" And bowing her head on her hands, she burst into tears.

Hurst could hardly speak.

"Yes, it was—it was a wicked, *wicked* marriage, and it brought a curse," sobbed the girl, a few moments afterward, as if replying to a question. "I never have found out the mystery of it—perhaps I never shall—but we are all so changed—mamma worst of all. It has been an awful household for years. I ought not to say all this to you," she added, looking out of the window, and about the room, fearfully. "It wouldn't surprise me if he had heard every word I have said. O how I hate him!"

"I regret exceedingly—" said Seymour, and there he stopped.

"You know what a happy family we were, Mr. Hurst. Ah! you never would believe we could be so sadly changed. And by what wicked machination do you suppose he got possession of our dear old Eden Lodge? the place poor papa bought, and thought so much of? I never dare



hardly to speak of it to mamma, for it seems as if all her troubles would kill her. And I tell you, Mr. Hurst, if it wasn't for poor mother, I'd go off somewhere, and be a governess; I would, indeed, to-morrow. But there we are, and there we must remain. If Hal would only marry, and take us somewhere! but he seems as different as our poor fortunes. He's not the old Hal. And O, Mr. Hurst," she added, with a fresh wail of grief, "it was so miserable that poor Angy died as she did! It was all so sudden, so awful! We felt it—I don't believe he did—but we did, for we knew how she—"

The girl bit her lip, and grew pale. Seymour Hurst added the word that she suppressed—"suffered"—said it to himself, bitterly, his heart bleeding afresh.

"I thought I must come over and see the old place just once more. O, the dear old place! We are under a spell, you see, over there—something I can't divine—and O, he thwarts us, he—" Again convulsively sobbing.

"My poor dear Mary," said Seymour, taking her hand, "you don't know how all this makes me suffer."

"Yes I do," she said, turning her face away. "Yes, I know you must have suffered, for he has tried to thwart me, just as he did—I mean—I mean I might have been in my own house, and—and—but he broke it all off."

"The base black wretch!" cried Seymour, between shut teeth.

"There, that's the bell for supper! how long I have been gone!" she cried, hastily wiping her tears away. "Good-by, Mr. Hurst. Please don't mention a word of this." And white and frightened, she hurried away.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### AN OUTRAGE.

"You must think me something less than a fool!" exclaimed Seymour Hurst, almost angrily. "Don't banter me upon that subject, I beg you, Hummel. When I want a wife, I shall know where to choose one—it's not very likely I'd go down among the city sewers, and pick a girl out of some vile old court. As much as I have laughed at blue blood, I think I've got a little too much in me to do that. But I assure you

I shall look after the welfare of this girl, if only that she is the protegee of my friend Mrs. Walters."

"All right," said Hummel. "I was only joking."

The words had cut like a sword into one poor tender heart, however. Flor heard them. She had entered noiselessly, hidden by the baize screen. Her heart leaped rapturously at the sound of that voice—why, she never asked herself. She slipped out silently as she had entered, flaming from head to foot with a sudden fever—shamed, hurt, with the same pain at her heart she had felt on that never-to-be-forgotten night of the interview with John Ivington.

When she returned, Hummel rallied her upon her pale cheeks and tardiness. She trembled, then, at the very thought of what she had heard—trembled when he shook her hand, and he interpreted her embarrassment in his own way.

"Some one has been here to see you," said Hummel, thinking her more lovely than ever, as she laid her shawl aside. "Your friend Mr. Hurst. He left a letter for you."

She did not answer—only bowed coldly, glanced at the letter, and resumed her sitting.

"You must finish to-day, Mr. Hummel," she said, not long after. "I can't come again."

"Pray why not?" he asked, astonished.

"I can't—" He saw how she trembled; he came round to her side.

"This is strange," he said, looking down. "Stay, Flor, stay here—here with me! I have learned to love you dearly. You shall be lonely no more; you shall have friends—every pleasure, every delight that money can purchase! I am not a poor man, little Flor—far from it, but—"

"Stop, Mr. Hummel; are you asking me to be your wife?" queried Flor, in her simplicity.

The question, so direct, so innocent, checked the man's eloquence on the instant. He flushed crimson, he stammered, stuttered—turned his bold eyes from her sweet face. In one flash of womanly intuition, she knew what this base man meant, and arose from her seat, all the dignity of her nature roused and wounded.

"I believe all men are wicked, *very* wicked!" she said, in a low quivering

voice. "I wish I could never know another—never—*never!*"

He stood back, perfectly powerless, as she threw on her shawl and tied her bonnet-strings, and adjusted her poor little veil, mechanically. Perhaps he never experienced, till that moment, what a base thing an unprincipled man could be—as he felt confounded, humiliated before this child, whom he thought he might bend to his purpose.

Flor walked that day till noon, hardly knowing or caring whither she went. It seemed as if her brain were heaped with living coals, it burned so. She shrank from every gentleman who passed her by, with a strange hatred. She declared to herself that she would never speak to another man, that she hated, abhorred the sight of all mankind—and took her wretchedness home with her.

The letter—the precious letter of her friend—there was balm in that.

"I send you a check for two hundred dollars, on the — Bank," (thus ran the closing paragraph)—"with which you can provide your poor old granpaw with a home. I may not see you again for many years; but remember, my dear, remember and be good. Under no circumstances be tempted to do one wrong action. You may receive a letter that I sent by a friend, some little time ago, for that young musician we talked about, who lived in the court." It is a recommendation to Professor Lablone, who has promised to procure him a minor position in an orchestra with which he has some influence."

The letter had been received the day before. It was of no use, Flor had then said, sadly. Poor Will, the young lad Mrs. Walters had pitied, was dead and buried.

That day! should she ever forget it? She had thought the other could not be paralleled, but this was the worst anguish of all. Her trust was gone, her best feelings outraged; and but for the balm of that sweet letter, she would have longed for death.

She drew the money—in due time the blind old man was placed in circumstances of comfort—and Flor was alone in the world, anxious only to be left alone.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FLOR SEES HER OLD ENEMY.

THE opera season was at its height. Never had the manager reaped a more bountiful harvest. Every night the splendid interior of the great Academy building blazed with jewels and beauty.

"The greatest combination of talent in the world," as the placards announced it, appeared nightly before brilliant and appreciative audiences.

Among the musicians was a youth whose beauty and modesty made him singularly prepossessing. Many a glass was turned towards him, as he sat so quietly absorbed in the score upon the music-rack, and played his little unassuming passages. Occasionally he glanced about him, let his eye wander over the fashionable groups in his vicinity, but it fell, if, by chance, it encountered a curious or admiring gaze. It is, perhaps, needless to say that this youth was Flor, in disguise. She had availed herself of Mrs. Walters's letter, procured a dress befitting the character she had chosen to assume, and had thus, as she thought, placed herself beyond the risk of insult. Her beautiful hair was cut—not close, but so that it hung in curly waves about the temples and throat, while a delicate skillfully-adjusted mustache, and soft silky side whiskers, completed the transformation. Among the rough members of the band she was styled "Miss Molly," from her extreme sensitiveness and dislike of vulgar vices; and yet the leader had been heard to say that there was "the material for a first-class violinist in that little fellow," who had once or twice filled the vacant chair of some member detained by illness. It was now the beginning of the second week, and Flor had become wonted to her new position. It only required that she should recall Seymour Hurst's words, or the keen stinging remembrance of Hummel's miserable hypocrisy, to nerve her to the better sustinment of her *role*. She had taken lodgings in a respectable house, such as she had never entered before with the same feeling of rest and security. Very plain and homely was the little room—almost as plain as the little domicil in Pop Court; but beneath the windows and around were no scenes of squalid filthy poverty, no battered doors and rotten door-steps, no old hats stuck through empty

panes, no brawling, swearing, staggering.

So Flor kept quite secluded during the day, practising her parts, and longing for the night, when she might forget all care, all anxiety for the future, in her passionate love for beauty and harmony. She had not forgotten John Hubert Ivington—nay, she thought much about him of late. The wisdom of the woman had put far away the foolish superstitions of childhood. She had made another vow, that if ever she met him again, she would follow and confront him. And, strangely enough, many a forgotten little incident of her earliest childhood came back and impressed itself upon her mind. Grandpap, too, had easily lent a willing ear to her proposed scheme, after he heard of Hummel's base proposition—seemed clearer in intellect; and Flor had arranged that, as he talked with an old man's pleasant garrulity of long-past scenes, some one should be paid for faithfully chronicling every word.

This night Flor had felt unusually excited; her manner was, in consequence, nervous, her face agitated. Even the clear notes of the prima donna, whose music had feasted her for the season, failed to compose her, in her highly-wrought state. At last, raising her eyes to the second private box, she knew why her system was so powerfully and mysteriously wrought upon. The splendid curtains were half drawn, a man's hand, the fourth finger encircled by a sparkling diamond ring, laid over the ruby richness of the velvet circle, and sometimes the face peered eagerly forward. It was John Ivington.

Flor drew a long convulsive breath, her fingers hung helplessly along the bridge of her violin, her lips parted, a deadly pallor crept to the edge of her hair, turning her very heart cold. The man beside her, seeing her shudder, asked if she were ill. She said no, and, with a strong effort, resumed her playing; but O, how she watched him! Not a movement escaped her. She noted how hard and stern his features had grown; otherwise, he was not altered. Near the close of the last act, she saw him draw on his gloves, and, pleading faintness, or some excuse, she left her violin, disappeared down the little door that led from the orchestra, and hurried into the vestibule. There she watched ten minutes, that seemed as many hours. More than one hanger-on there noticed the handsome,

restless, anxious-looking young man, and smiled, as they put their own silly construction upon his movements. Suddenly the crowd began to pour out. It could not be that John Ivington had hurried by in that moment of her leaving the orchestra, and thus escaped her. She ran round the vestibule, careless of etiquette, sprang up the stairs, crowding, pushing, gained a view of the box. It was empty. Groaning with disappointment, she made her way outside, taking up a stand near the line of carriages, then darted off in hot pursuit of the man she imperfectly descried, and was merged in the crowd.

Suddenly, after a losing pursuit, a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned, surprised, half vexed, for she had lost sight of John Ivington.

"Flor," said a low but well-known voice, "you are fatiguing yourself uselessly. Come with me, only a moment. Surely you are not afraid to trust yourself with me."

She followed slowly, up the steps of the very hotel where, when a child, she had begged for mercy, and, strangely enough, entered that very same room, haunted with such thrilling memories. Looking round the room with a shudder, she suddenly remembered the incongruity of her attire, and shrank back, tremblingly.

"Be seated," said Seymour Hurst, kindly. "We will talk this matter over, and perhaps I can help you."

"How did you know me?" murmured Flor, in a smothered voice.

"My poor child, I knew you from the first night I saw you in the orchestra. Don't think I blame you for the manner in which you seek to protect yourself; but you run great risks."

"But not from *men*—not of insult and unkindness," said Flor, hastily.

"I respect your reasons, whatever they were," said Seymour Hurst, still softly. "For many months I have tried to find you, and I received the first hint of this transformation from the home where your old blind friend is so happily provided for. Though I could elicit nothing from him, the attendants said none but a very young and handsome gentleman called there to see him. Then I suspected the disguise, and perhaps the motives that led you to assume it."

"Because of the vileness and treachery

of almost every one by whom I was surrounded."

"You do well to say *almost* every one, Flor," said Seymour, gently, but gravely. "I had charged myself with the responsibility of guarding you from all possible harm—because I knew how childish and innocent you were, and I only erred against my better judgment when I did not caution you against Hummel."

A bitter look crossed Flor's expressive face.

"I fear you have also met with others who may have been unkind or base. I have watched you since the first night at the opera, feeling sure it was you, by your peculiar manner—remembering, even, how you held the bow on that night when I carried Mrs. Walters's message. And knowing Ivington very well—"

"Know *him*! do you know him?" cried Flor.

"I am very sorry to say that I do. Seeing you, as I was about to say, watching him with such intentness, first flushed, then pale, I concluded that in some way you had received wrong at his hands."

"I have, I have!" cried Flor. "He made me a beggar and an outcast. I *must* see him;"—and she sprang up uneasily—"I must see him!"

"Stop, Flor," said Seymour, still very gravely; "are you wedded to this idea? do you prefer this disguise?"

"O no, no!" Flor cried, turning crimson; "it was only that I might protect myself from insult that I adopted it. But I am all alone—so alone, so friendless!"

"My poor Flor," he said, with pity in his voice, "had you waited only a few days, I had a plan in my mind that I think would have done away with all need for this disguise. My sister and myself had arranged for you—"

He stopped short, confounded by the sudden startling gleam of mingled pride and contempt that gave a new expression to the beautiful face.

"Mr. Hurst," she said, slowly, "it is but due to you to say that I included *you* among my enemies at that time, and would have taken no favor at your hands."

"Flor!" Seymour Hurst had risen, and stood aghast at her vehemence. "What had I done—pray, what *had* I done to forfeit your respect?"

"Nothing," returned Flor, coldly, "only

I heard your bitter words, unintentionally, the last morning I ever went to Mr. Hummel's studio. They were right and just, no doubt; you *are* a rich man, perhaps—I was a beggar; but O Heaven! I felt so hurt, so friendless!" And covering her face with her hands, Flor burst into tears.

He stood confused, troubled, serious.

"Forgive me, Flor, if I injured your feelings. I would not have done it knowingly, for worlds." His voice was broken—that touched Flor.

"O, I dare say it was foolish—I dare say it was contemptible in me to mind it," she said, dashing the tears away. And very beautiful she looked, for she had instinctively removed the masculine ornaments from her face. "It is all forgiven, Mr. Hurst—at least, I hope so. I want now but one thing—to see John Hubert Ivington."

"I never knew there was a Hubert in his name."

"But there is."

"Will you go home with me, to my sister Mary? I live at Berylton, and Mr. Ivington is my next neighbor."

Flor clasped her hands, mute with delight that she should see her enemy at last.

Seymour Hurst stepped aside a moment. It was a frivolous thing to do, to lift the carved ornament on the mantel, but the truth was, something down deep in his heart caused his face to change so suddenly! Great Heaven! was the fate upon him to love her, after all? he asked himself. Had he been loving her all this while, with a passion that but this moment flashed upon his perceptions, rushed through his whole being in its fullness and intensity, moving him as no other love had ever done?

"You will go, Flor?" He had turned, having gained the mastery over his countenance.

"O yes, but—" She looked down, distressed again.

"Never mind the dress; Mary will fit you out," he said, smiling a little. "You are both of a size."

She lifted her beaming face, answering the smile. All the old animosity was forgotten. Again his emotions nearly staggered him—but his will was a match for the strongest. He helped her in the carriage he had called, and they drove to Berylton.

FLOE AT WILLOWAY.—A GREAT SURPRISE.

"It is all right. He will call on you this afternoon.

So said Seymour Hurst, entering the little drawing-room where Flor sat, engaged in sewing. A beautiful flush mounted to either cheek as she received this news.

"How old is the little child, Mr. Hurst?"

"Five, I think, and terribly deformed."

"Poor little soul!" murmured Flor.

"Well, I can be very tender of her, for pity, and for love, too, perhaps."

Seymour turned abruptly away.

"Flor," said Mary, quickly, when he had gone out, "my brother loves you."

"O Mrs. Wessing!" cried Flor, aghast.

"He does—he loves you."

"You should not tell me that," murmured Flor, controlling her voice.

"He is the soul of honor," Mary continued. "Do you know he was almost engaged to be married to the girl this Mr. Irvington married?"

Flor started—one hand clasped the other nervously.

"He was, and he has never waited upon any woman since, not even in the most casual way. But yet—shall I tell you?—I don't think he ever knew what love was till now. Not that he has told me by word or sign; no, I have found it out."

"He is too proud to love one who has been before the public as I have," Flor forced herself to say. "I *know* he is, for once I heard him say so."

Mary Wessing looked at her narrowly.

"He may have said that *once*," she repeated, quietly. "He is very proud—so proud that I believe he lives wholly above the opinion of the world."

Flor trembled from head to foot. She had no time to analyze or indulge her emotions, however, for John Irvington was on the porch. Face to face with him, how stately and composed she grew! On his part, he was charmed with his new governess, engaging her before he had talked five minutes.

"There's a face for you!" he said to himself. Ah! but, John Irvington, it was *not* the face the old witch showed you at Breslau.

Seymour went over with her to Willoway, and John Irvington scowled when he met him.

"Shall I call now and then?" Seymour asked, humbly, as he parted with her on the threshold of that great drawing-room.

"Come often—do come often. Yours will be the only welcome face in this house," Flor had whispered.

And she was left alone with her sickly fretful, pining charge. Months passed, and the little one loved her as she loved no other inmate of Willoway.

"She don't take to me," said Mrs. Collins, querulously. The poor woman's trials had hurried on her second childhood. This she said as she sat in the drawing-room one afternoon, while Flor was caressing her charge.

"And I don't want her to take to me," cried Mary Collins, rising as she spoke, and leaving the room.

"Don't mind her, dear," said the elderly woman, who seemed attracted by the orphan. "She hates everything in this house, from the master down. Do you know he's been persecuting her these six months, and his poor wife only dead a year? Yes, broke off a beautiful match, my dear, because he says he wants her himself. Ah! he must do as he pleases. You see he has got the power over us, child—he has got the power over us."

"What power?" asked Flor, indignantly.

"Don't ask me, dear. It will all be ended when Mary and I are in our graves—and O, that it may be soon!"

"Bear it a little longer," said Flor, pitifully. "God will not surely allow this iniquity to prosper."

"Well, it has prospered, my dear," was the quiet hopeless reply.

Flor saw the master's features change whenever he came in her presence, and loathed the change. He did not disguise that he was beginning to be passionately fond of her. This gave her one advantage—she could turn him to her will—there was nothing he would refuse her.

"Mr. Irvington," she said, one evening after supper, "could you as well as not give me another room?"

He looked up anxiously, the muscles around his mouth twitching strangely.

"Is—is there anything an-noy-ing in there?"

"It may be my fancy, but I do not rest well; it may be in my dreams the old man comes, but—"

"What?" half shouted the master of Willoway, his voice hoarse, as he started to his feet.

"I said it might be fancy, but as it has appeared every night—Mr. Ivington, what has happened? Are you ill?"

He was looking down the room with an absorbed, a fascinated gaze. Suddenly he shivered, touched his forehead, laughed, and nervously clutched at the knickknacks on the table.

"You said you saw—"

"O, it is nothing very terrible," said Flor, calmly, "even if it should be a spirit (for I hear Willoway is haunted), I need not fear. I never harmed any one in my life."

Her clear eyes were raised to his troubled ones. She had begun a torture which was to probe his soul to the quick. Not that she was cruel or remorseless, but she knew the bad man with whom she had to deal—knew there were no other means in her power by which justice could be hoped for.

"Upon my word, I'm getting quite used to my old friend," said Flor, smiling, one morning.

"What! he follows you, then? you certainly moved—"

"O yes! I moved into the other room, but he seems quite as much at home there. I had the best view of him last night; an old man, small of stature, with the softest, most silvery hair falling from broad white temples. His face looks so kind, so benevolent! the dearest old face I ever saw! I really think in time he will speak to me."

"You—you—are—not—frightened?" asked John Ivington, who had turned ghastly pale, "you would—that is—not be afraid to speak to him?"

"Why should I?" asked Flor. "I never harmed him, the dear old man! I wonder what can make him so uneasy that he can't rest in his grave?"

John Ivington said nothing; he arose, and moved, somewhat unsteadily, Flor thought, out of the room. Mary came forward from her seat she had occupied at the other end of the apartment. Mary was a handsome girl, but something hard and bitter seemed changing the blue eyes and pretty features.

"Will you let me share your room for a night or two?" she asked.

Flor looked up surprised at this first intimation of confidence.

"It doesn't trouble me at all," she said, softly. "I am not afraid."

"But if I could see this—this appearance, whatever it is?"

"You could not, probably—no one could see it but me."

"How do you know that?"

Flor looked down, flushing.

"I—think—I am one of those persons who see such things," she faltered, "in my mind—and—that—" she could not deceive, and broke down. "But you shall share my room," she added, a moment after. "I am glad you asked me; it proves that I am not disagreeable to you, as I thought at first I was."

"O no indeed—not now. I did feel a very little jealous when poor Angy's child was put in your care—but—now—since—since Mr. Ivington is so very partial to you—I like you better."

"Then you make him over to me," said Flor, smiling.

"O no—no?" Mary exclaimed, with a shudder. "I would not inflict such a fearful fate on any one I knew—or even on one I hated. But you are different from me. I did think at first you would be flattered with the idea that you might be mistress of Willoway, but if I can read your character, you have something like such a loathing for this man as I have. Yes, you are different from me—differently placed, I mean—independent; you have nobody but yourself to please—you are not tied, hand and foot. Do you know I'm afraid that man would have made me his wife before now, if it had not been for Seymour Hurst? I believe John Ivington hates him."

Flor flushed and trembled, and made a faint pretence of picking something from the floor.

"Why do you remain here?" asked Flor, a moment after.

"How can I help myself? We have lost Eden Lodge—that was ours. Mr. Ivington got it, some way. We have no other home—my brother is kept constantly poor, paying some old debt, mother says—some debt of honor. He cannot marry, even, and is getting worn and old long before his time. I do think John Ivington broke off a match between him and a wealthy girl, out of sheer malice. Why what is the man? I often wonder if some fiend possesses his body, for as sure as seven devils were driven out of those old sinners in Capernaum, so

sure there is one, at least, in John Ivington."

"My dear—I am remarkably obliged to you," said a low voice near them. Mary turned with a faint scream. John Ivington stood by the door, hat in hand. He bowed courteously, waved his hat once, slightly, and was gone.

"How much do you think he heard?" gasped Mary, catching at Flor's hands.

"Only that very last sentence," replied Flor, soothingly. "I saw him when he entered, though not in time to warn you."

"But I shall suffer for it," Mary murmured, and hurried away at the call of her mother's bell.

Flor still sat there—her heart was singing, though her lips were mute—even while she felt pity for those unfortunate inmates of Willoway. She saw John Ivington drive by—yesterday he had taken her and the little child—she saw—and now her heart beat faster—Seymour Hurst walking rapidly up the long level road.

He came in, looked around, and seemed relieved to find her alone.

"Flor," he said, walking straight towards her, "I have come to ask you a question. For that piece of impertinence I was guilty of at Hummel's I have obtained your forgiveness, I feel sure, and now—Flor, I want you—will you be my wife? my own, pure, good, conquering wife? Words would fail me to tell my appreciation of your noble, noble character—Flor—can you love me?"

He had bent over her till one hand rested on her own; trembling it was, and then he sank down further, till he was almost on his knees, it seemed. She turned her face towards him, after a moment—he needed not the answer of the lips. Her eyes told him.

"Thank God! my darling—forever and forever—thank God!" he said; and there were tears in the dark manly eyes, as he gathered her to his bosom, and touched her lips with lips as pure.

"I could not bear to see you here, under the influence of that evil man; I could not bear to feel that the shadow of this place rested on you, my blessed darling. I cannot let you stay here—Mary and I—"

"But I *must* stay here, Seymour."

"*Must!*" He let her hand fall.

"It is my home—my rightful home," she cried, in a low sobbing voice, "bought with my dear father's money."

He moved back still further, doubting

the evidence of his senses; looked at her, a kind of fright dilating his eyes.

"Listen to me a moment, my good kind friend. Sit down—don't look at me so—hear me, and then judge if I am crazed," said Flor, rapidly, sustaining the even tenor of her voice with difficulty. "Long ago, when I was a little child—a poor little beggar—I took an oath—it seemed a terrible thing to me then—but I kept it, sacredly, until this hour—this moment, when I feel God will pardon me for breaking it. This man, John Hubert Ivington, is my foster-brother. My father took him from the very depths of poverty, because his beauty pleased him, and gave me, a baby, to him for a sister. I think as we grew up together, my father hardly knew the difference between us. He was a gentle confident man, who married very late in life.

"When I was six, and John Hubert perhaps nineteen or twenty, my father took us to Europe (I should have said my mother died when I was born); we staid there a year. Coming home, the vessel, a large merchant ship, was wrecked. My father was instantly killed. I remember now that my foster-brother threw me off rudely, while I was clinging to him, in order that he might get into one of the boats, with a little green box in his hand. There was a terrible confusion. I was caught up by a tall old man, one of the steerage passengers, who had often played the violin to amuse me. Then there was a terrible blank, except that I saw Hubert once, when I was just being swallowed up by the great waves—and I remember nothing more. We were picked up, however—but the fright and the cold made the old fiddler sick. His eyes were inflamed, and he soon lost their sight.

"Three or four years passed—I was deserted—thrown among outcasts. Nobody believed my story—the miserable creatures about me laughed at me, and called me a ragged princess. One night I saw Hubert Ivington, O how rapturously happy I was at that moment! All my troubles were over, I thought. I let fall my poor tambourine; I ran, I flew towards him, and hung on him. No doubt I acted like a crazy child—but I was almost crazed, with joy—he shook me off. Then he affected to be amused, and let me into his room—the same one I went into with you."

Flor paused for a moment, grew pale, her lips trembled.

"There—the man was a coward. O how brutally he treated me! O, by what names he called me! I wondered how God could see him abuse a poor helpless little child. He even threatened me with a whip—he even dared to threaten me with the jail. When I left him, I had no more faith in man. Then I said, with passion, that I had done with all trying, forevermore—that so help me God! I would never, *never* speak of my past life to any living mortal again. I thought my heart was broken—and—and you see now why all these things have troubled me so."

Seymour Hurst stood before her, very pale and silent, so pale that in the waning light he looked corpse-like.

"It is well he is not here," at last he cried, in his old way, between shut teeth. "Thank God I did not know this before—I asked that question."

"And I say thank God too!" murmured Flor. "You see now, it is better for me not to leave this house just at this time. I know my father would not be unjust to his only child—I know that though he trusted so in the boy he rescued from degradation, that in the event of my death he might have left him his fortune, still he could not put forth the shadow of a claim if I were to prove this thing against him. And I will. His base lips shall perjure himself. He is all wicked—all through—and God has put him in my hands. Now are you satisfied if I stay?"

"Satisfied with whatever you do, my beloved—but this is all so utterly unexpected to me, that I hardly know how to act."

## CHAPTER XX.

### CONCLUSION.

"No more of the old visitation, I hope, Miss Hart?"—that was the name she went by in this family—said John Ivington one morning some days afterward.

"On the contrary, it has become a permanent infliction," said Flor.

"My dear young lady, I am really very sorry," said John Ivington, whose senses this girl had completely enthralled. "I would do anything in the world to rid you of such an annoyance—short of making up my mind to part with you—if it becomes intolerable—and—you wished it."

Flor saw that he trembled.

"In fact, Miss—Hart—I—was on the

point—of—pardon my bluntness—but I love you—even in this short time—love you to distraction—I cannot live—"

"Mr. Ivington," said Flor, calmly, "you must not talk in that way—indeed you would not, if you knew of what that old man had accused you."

"Accused me!"

"He said only last night, that once there was a little child committed to your care, and that you basely deserted it. That afterwards that child was thrown in your way, and prayed to you for mercy and protection, but you answered with taunts and threats. Mr. Ivington, if you ever did such a thing as that, don't talk of love to me."

"It is false—it is all false," cried John Ivington, in a shaken voice, "the shadow li—"

"John Hubert Ivington," said Flor, suddenly rising, and fixing the man with the power of her angry eyes, "it is *not* false. You *did* desert that child—you did afterward spurn and insult her; God help you, John Ivington—for I am that child, and I will bring judgment into this guilty household. Herbert Ivington was my father—my dear old father—and in the person of his child, that father denounces you for perfidy and a broken trust."

She did not mean to do this; she did not dream but he would hold his own, and not shake and cower before her—she did not dream of the madness of his love. He staggered back, gave one great cry, and fell like a corpse at her feet. All the passion went out of Flor's heart, at this sight; something of her old sisterly tenderness came back, even over the miserable prostrate form. The household was roused—the servants came up. Mrs. and Mary Collins hurried thither, agitated and trembling.

He was removed to his own room up stairs, the doctors sent for, remedies applied, but for a long time all skill seemed vain to restore him. Day after day, for weeks, that answer came, "no better," until he seemed at the expiration of thirty days to be slowly mending.

One night he was unusually restless. His nurse, a light sleeper, occupied the chamber next to his, or rather a large recess, divided from the room by a curtain. It was very still there, and John Ivington rose up in bed, gazing cautiously around him. Hollow-eyed and gaunt, he looked little



like the handsome man of a year ago. Rising, he contrived to throw on his double gown, though his hands shook as with palsy, and finding his way to a secret corner, he took from thence a small green box, and placed it upon the table. All this was done so cautiously, that one on the watch might have taken him for a criminal, about to commit some secret but desperate deed. Frequently he looked round, suspicious, it seemed, of the very shadows that lay long and gaunt like himself across the floor, and over the walls and ceiling. Nobody stirred, however, nothing was heard save the subdued rustle of his motions, or the crackle of paper, as his wide sleeve swept across it. He drew the shaded lamp nearer, and with a small key unlocked the box. It was filled with papers, some sealed, some tied with narrow red tape, or colored ribbon. Of these he laid two or three aside, putting the rest back in the box.

Then he sat back a moment, pausing to think; then detached the shade from the lamp, lifted one of the parcels, a thin yellowish document, carefully labelled—held it with his shaking hand so near the light that it turned and curled at the edges. Apparently he had not the nerve, however, to prosecute his design, for his hand fell helplessly upon the table, and his head fell forward, like that of a man half in despair. Again and again he seemed to renew his efforts; again and again as the paper quivered at the near hot breath of the flame, he faltered, and at last threw it down upon the table, shaking his head, helplessly.

Then he drew forth a smaller document. Looking over his shoulder, one might have seen the forged note of Harry Collins. That he also laid upon the table beside the other, and placed before him a quire of paper, which he lifted from the drawer under his hand.

"Curse this weakness!" he muttered, audibly, "it shall not overcome me. Great Heavens!" he groaned, "that I should love that girl so! and find in her—curses on my fate! Perhaps, if I really did the right thing now—she might—yes, such things have been," he continued, soliloquizing in half-broken sentences, as he lifted the pen. "I *could* excuse myself too; I might convince her that I considered her an impostor—I was younger then, thoughtless, heedless, foolish. But where are her proofs?

Great God! what need is there of proofs—what need was there, *ever*?"

Then he began to write. He called her his sister, implored her forgiveness for the past; told her that he was now convinced, though he had doubted the child in rags and dirt; implored her to overlook his cowardly conduct; to take pity on the man whose soul she had subdued, and whose course she had turned from evil—wrote on till the beaded sweat rolled from off his white forehead, and his hand trembled so that the words were illegible.

"Weak, weak, weak," he muttered; "I am overdoing." And the pen dropped from his helpless fingers. "So weak?" he murmured, pitifully, letting his head sink forward upon one arm, while the other fell powerless against his side.

When the nurse came in in the morning, he had not changed his position; the papers still lay scattered about, the light burnt low and smokily; the room was shadowless, and yet overshadowed by an awful silent presence.

He went forward hastily, touched the sleeper, started, drew nearer, looked into the half-closed eyes, noted the fallen jaw, the marble whiteness of every feature, rang the bell in frantic haste, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Help, help! the man is dead!"

He was dead. Seymour Hurst came over as soon as he heard the news. The papers were left as they stood till after the inquest and the funeral; then Flor Ivington was acknowledged mistress of Willoway. For the first time Seymour Hurst knew of Harry's only lapse from virtue; but he quietly burned the paper, and the man was free. He told no one, not even Flor, when she became his wife. It was her wish to give back Eden Lodge in the possession of the Collinses, and the old lady wept like a child when the deed was placed in her hands.

And now Flor became the benefactor of the wretched and miserable whom she had known in the days of her adversity; fortune brightened even for the little old Dutchman, who had in his maudlin way done her many a good turn. The old grandpap was happy in his seclusion. Harry Collins threw off the terrible load of care that had so long cursed him, and Mary became the wife of the man she

loved. At last came to Flor the most surprising news of all, in the shape of a letter from Mrs. Walters.

“It was my own sister, dear Flor, whom your papa married. There was a coolness in the family consequent on my giving my hand to a poor man, who had his fortune to make, and your father being a great student, and adverse to all society, save that of his child, and I living in a distant city, we seldom met after your mother’s death. When I read of that fearful wreck, and that only your father’s foster-son was saved, and that he inherited the property, I did not dream that you, my poor child, had gone through so frightful an experience.

Why did you not tell me your story?

“Yes it must have been my sister’s beautiful spirit—God’s good providence that led you to me. I could not tell why I loved you so strangely, but now I know. Success and happiness attend you, darling. Sometimes I half guessed at the truth; do you remember when I detected a likeness between you and my own little Flor?”

The child of so unfortunate a union, Angy’s poor little deformed daughter, found a haven in the almost parental love of both Flor and Seymour. Willoway was haunted no longer by evil or unhappiness, but was surrounded by everything bright and beautiful.

## THANKSGIVING AT MARKHAM HOUSE.

BY BLANCHE SHAW.

"MARY, this is folly; nay worse than folly; it is a blind infatuation with an unworthy fancy."

The girl looked up, startled, and the man continued, "Yes, Mary, in spite of your quiet patience, I have guessed your secret all these years, and I have borne with you, hoping that time would tear the veil from your eyes and show him to you in his true light. But I have hoped in vain. You still obstinately hug your delusion to your heart, and further forbearance on my part would be weakness. My child, think what you are doing. Look at my gray hairs and failing strength. In the course of nature it is not probable that I shall be with you many more years. And your youth is passing, too, Mary, and taking with it the power to bear unhurt the cold indifference of the world. You cannot be happy alone, Mary. Your nature is too gentle for it. You need a strong loving hand to help you over the rough spots of life. Without it you would shrink and wither, and suffer a thousand deaths before it came at last to rest you. Think of this, Mary. Think how I have loved you; think of my agony in leaving you to such a fate. Think of all, and do not let the memory of a base scoundrel blast your happiness forever."

The speaker, a kindly-looking, gray-haired man, bent over the woman, and laid his hand upon her bowed head. She did not speak, and after a moment he continued:

"Mark Eldon is a true, honest man. He loves you with all the strength of his nature. Your happiness will be his first and dearest care, and knowing it in his keeping I could die happy. O Mary, do not let that base miscreant stab me with a double-edged sword. Do not let him break your heart, as well as disgrace my name forever. Think of his ingratitude, his black—"

The girl lifted her head hastily.

"Stop! stop! in *Pity's* name. If you can say those words I cannot hear them. O my dear guardian, how can it be, that you, so kind and good to every one, are so harsh and cruel to him! Think how long

ago it was. Think of those long years of remorse and probable suffering. Think of the time he played a happy babe at your knees; and if you cannot forgive him, at least think kindly."

She clasped his hand in both of hers, and looked appealingly at him; but his brow only grew dark, and he shut his teeth tightly as he replied:

"Why should I think of him when every thought but makes me breathe a fresh curse upon him, undutiful son, dishonest man, and false lover! Think of him! My God, if I could but forget him, and the stain he has put upon me!"

He clenched his hands and paced the floor rapidly a few moments; and then stopping by her again, said huskily:

"Pardon my vehemence, Mary; I should not have given vent to my feelings, but an ever-smouldering flame will sometimes burst out. But enough of it! Ten years have elapsed since Albert Markham's name has passed my lips, and should I live fifty more, I swear it shall never pass them again. I renew my curse, and cast him off afresh, black-hearted traitor that he is. May he live a vagabond upon the earth, and may he suffer but a hundredth part of the agony he has inflicted upon me! No! no!" as Mary made an effort to speak, "I will hear no word for him. He is as if he had never lived. I blot him out forever! And now, Mary, daughter of my heart, I make a last appeal to you. Will you inflict another stab upon my wounded heart, and rob my last days of my only light? O no, my child, you will not! Let me tell Mark Eldon you will be his wife, and to-morrow will indeed be a happy Thanksgiving to us all."

The pallor on Mary's face grew marble-like, as rising she laid her hand on Mr. Markham's arm and said:

"Dear guardian, I will be Mark Eldon's wife." And before he could speak, she left the room.

And now I must ask you to go back with me for a few moments, to some things that happened many years ago, and which will furnish a key to the above scene.

Henry Markham was left a widower early in life with one son, Albert; who in his infancy developed a precocity of mind and brightness of disposition that made him the pet and tyrant of all about him. By the time his childhood was passed he was fully convinced that the earth was made especially for him to live upon, and that it was entirely beneath his dignity to acknowledge the authority of any one, his father included. Things progressed in this way till he reached his twentieth year, and had become in every respect a very fast young man, when Mary Craige, an orphan daughter of an old friend of Mr. Markham's, became a member of their family. Mary was just sixteen, and as pure and noble by nature as she was fair in person. Albert was at once charmed by her, and the old story was acted over again, as it will be to the end of time—they loved each other. For a time Albert abandoned his dissolute habits, and his fond unhappy father began to hope that the nobler part of his nature would rise above the weeds that overshadowed it, and assert itself master in the end. Vain hope! The fetters of vice, when once firmly fastened, cannot be thrown off at will. Albert would listen with penitent sorrow to Mary's reproaches, and promise amendment, only at the first temptation to fall into the same vices again. But through all her love never faltered, and soon constituted the only shield between him and his father, whose forbearance had almost reached its limit.

Thus things went on till Mary reached her nineteenth year, just ten years before our story opens, when the old time-honored firm of Markham & Co. was brought to the brink of ruin by a heavy defalcation, and the crime lay between Mark Eldon their confidential clerk, and Albert Markham. The world stood aghast—so stunned that it knew not upon which to cast the odium. But it was soon decided for it; Mark Eldon came forward and demanded the severest examination, and Albert Markham fled without a word of defence, or leaving a clue by which to trace him.

These were fearful days in the old town; so fearful that gossips spoke with bated breath, and people crossed over to the other side when Mr. Markham with the air of a stricken Roman passed by. And

Mary, how did she stand the blow! As women of her nature always do—patiently, silently, with a resignation that was more pathetic than the wildest grief. The day after Albert's flight, Mr. Markham called her to him and told her that he cast him off forever, and forbade her ever to mention his name. Mary bowed in obedience to his command; and never, till the evening our story opens, had the subject been mentioned between them.

Thanksgiving logs were mingling their ruddy glare with the sunbeams over the snow when Mary greeted her guardian at breakfast.

"God bless you, my child!" said he, kissing her brow. "This is a true Thanksgiving to me, and may we have many more as bright. Mark called last evening after you left me to say that the young people are to have a grand sleighing party to-day, and to ask you to go with him. I ventured to promise for you, and also asked him to come back here to supper, and to have a merry time in the evening. Do you like it, my dear?"

Mary's heart swelled almost to choking. The last time gayety was in the Markham House was in one of Albert's repentant moods, when he had been the light and life of all. But she smothered her sigh, and said she was pleased; and he continued:

"Mark will call this morning for his answer. Thank God, my child, that you have been able to make a noble man happy."

Mary bent over her plate in silence, and before Mr. Markham could say more, the door opened and the object of their conversation entered. Mark Eldon was a man who could be described by one word—correct. His books when offered at the time of the trouble were perfectly correct. The regret he expressed for Albert's offence was correct. His after devotion to Mr. Markham was correct to a word. The persistent patience with which he had sued for Mary's hand was correct, and the manner in which he stood looking at her from his cold brown eyes was correct in the extreme.

"Good-morning, Mr. Markham," said he, addressing himself to him first. "I hope I am not untimely."

"Not at all, Mark. I was just telling Mary of our plans for the day."

"And she approves?" he asked, with the correct amount of eagerness. Mary raised her eyes from her plate, and though she was as white as the china, she extended her hand and said with a smile:

"I am delighted, Mr. Eldon; nothing could be more charming."

"You are too kind," and he pressed a proper kiss upon her hand. Mary drew it away with a shudder she could not suppress, and Mark seating himself at the table the meal proceeded with outward cheerfulness.

The morning passed. The Thanksgiving turkey was eaten, and Mary stood waiting by her wrappings for the jingle of Mark's sleighbells.

By a fortunate combination of circumstances she had not been alone with him since her conversation with Mr. Markham, and she now awaited him with that strange mixture of eagerness and dread with which we always meet the tragic moments of our lives. At last the bells sounded. She seized her furs with nervous haste, and a bright red burned in her cheeks. Mr. Markham opened the door.

"Most ready, Mary? Mark says wrap up warm, for it is very cold." Then seeing her brilliant cheeks and eyes, "Why, child, how bright and happy you look. Mark will be dazzled quite out of his senses, poor fellow."

Mary smiled her answer, and following him out to the sleigh, was muffled up in the robes beside her lover. Away they went over the crisp white snow, Mark sitting correctly erect, and holding the reins at the proper angle, and Mary trying not to shrink away to the extreme edge of her seat. The party was to meet at a house about a mile distant from Markham, and they had ridden about half the distance in silence, when Mark, throwing himself a little out of the perpendicular in Mary's direction, said:

"Miss Mary, I wish to say a few words to you upon a subject deeply interesting to me, and which I dare to hope is not entirely indifferent to you."

He paused and Mary unmistakably shrank away without reply, at which a look half triumph half pain, came into his face; for, spite of his propriety, Mark Eldon had a heart and Mary filled all of it that he could spare from himself. The silence lasted a moment, then he continued:

"Mr. Markham has been good enough to tell you of my feelings which could have been no secret, and it only remains for me to say myself that I love you, and ask you to be my wife."

He actually leaned over her as he said this, and his eyes were really tender. Poor Mary had reached the extreme limit of her seat, and could only sit and feel his breath upon her cheek till she found voice to reply:

"Mr. Eldon, my guardian informed me of the honor you would do me, and I presume before this he has told you my answer. I will be your wife, I cannot say that I love you; but as my guardian's trusted friend, I respect you, and if this will satisfy you, I will do my duty by you as faithfully as lies in my power."

They were nearing the meeting-place, and as Mary ceased speaking the jingle of bells and merry laughter fell on their ears. Mark bent over and kissed her quickly, and by the time he had assumed his proper position, they were in the midst of the laughing merry party. There was the usual greeting, confusion and good-natured discussing, and then the whole party dashed away, as merrily as though care were a thing unknown. The destination of the party was a place about ten miles distant, where they were to warm themselves and return to Markham House in time for supper and the evening's gayety.

They reached the place safely, the reeking horses had cooled off in their blankets, the blooming girls had deepened their roses by the glowing stove over hot coffee, and stood waiting in their mufflers to begin their homeward journey. One by one they were snugly packed into their sleighs by anxious swains, and the party started away again over the snow, now dabbled here and there by the crimson stains of the setting sun. Mary and Mark were about the middle of the train. They had travelled nearly a mile when one of the rear sleighs suddenly broke out of line, and endeavored to pass them, striking, as it did so, the back of their sleigh, and nearly overturning it. Mark instantly passed the reins to one hand, and seized Mary with the other, at the same time throwing his weight on the opposite side of the sleigh and righting it. It was but the work of a moment, but that moment was too long. The horse, a very spirited animal, sprang forward as soon as

he felt the reins loosened, and before Mark could get him in hand again, he had taken the bit, and was plunging away at a mad rate. Without a word or a cry, Mary clung to her seat, and Mark struggled bravely with the horse; but in vain; he could no more control him than the wind. On, on they went, till suddenly, striking a concealed stone, the sleigh turned over, throwing Mary out on the snow, but Mark, being entangled with the robes and reins, was dragged on with the vehicle. On, on, still faster, till suddenly, above the clash of the bells, a shrill whistle rang out, curdling the very air. But a few yards ahead lay the railroad, and down it came thundering an express train, at a rate that would catch and grind both horse and man to atoms, unless the hand of Providence itself stopped them before they reached it. On dashed the horse. On, on came the iron monster, while cries of horror rose from the sleighs following. Nearer, nearer! A moment more, and Mark Eldon would be in eternity, when like a flash a man sprang from the shadow of a bush, and seized the flying horse by the bridle. The animal reared and plunged, dragging the man from his feet, but he clung to him with an iron grip, and forced him back till the train went thundering by. The other sleighs soon came up. The horse was secured, and Mark taken from the ruins. Mary had been picked up, and found but slightly hurt; but Mark presented a sorry sight, cut and bleeding, and wholly insensible. Fortunately a house was near; they carried him to it, and in a short time he revived. He looked vacantly about him a moment, and then seeing the physician at his side, he motioned him to lean near him. He did so, and in an eager whisper Mark asked:

"Am I badly hurt? Will I die?"

"Of course not, my dear fellow," replied the doctor, with the professional cheerfulness the occasion demanded. "You will be all right in a few days."

But Mark looked sternly at him.

"This is no time for jesting, doctor; tell me truly, as you expect one day to die."

The doctor's face grew grave.

"I cannot say, Eldon. You are hurt badly. You may recover, and a few hours may end all."

A groan burst from Mark, and he closed his eyes. A moment, and he opened them, and looking eagerly around, said:

"Mary! Where is she? Is she hurt?"

Mary came to the bedside and took his hand. His eyes lighted as he looked at her, and turning again to the doctor, he asked, appealingly:

"Am I so very bad?"

The doctor shook his head. He looked again at Mary, and his face worked as though moved by a fearful struggle. The doctor held a stimulant to his lips, and then, as though possessed of sudden strength, he half rose, and still holding Mary by the hand, said, clearly:

"Listen to me, all, for I fear my end is near, and I cannot carry to my grave the weight of the crime that has borne me down for years. Hear me now. On my soul, as a dying man, I speak truth. Albert Markham is an innocent man. I did the deed!"

He paused a moment, and then catching his breath, continued:

"I hated him and loved her, and knew that while he was in my path I could not win her. I determined to destroy him, and I did it. Ha! what is that?" And he fell back fainting, as, pushing back the crowd, there stood at his pillow the man who had saved him—Albert Markham!

A deathlike silence reigned a moment, and then Albert Markham, turning to the crowd, said, slowly:

"You heard him! He spoke truly. He did the deed. I knew it, but he had done his work so skillfully that I was powerless to prove it; and what weight would my testimony have beside his! I was ruined, and not daring to face my fate, I fled. For ten long years I have been a homeless wanderer, bitterly repenting the sins of my youth in remorse and suffering. Many a night have I slept with no shelter but the heavens, my last thought being a prayer to open my eyes no more on earth. But death comes not to such wretches as I. A few months ago a wild homesickness seized me, and urged by a power I could not resist, I turned my feet this way, hoping that outside in my dark desolation I might catch the glow of their Thanksgiving fire, and hear the echo of their mirth. God knows, I hoped for nothing more! Can it be that this is real—no dream?"

And Albert Markham bowed his head in his hands and sobbed like a boy, till soft fingers touched him, and a sweet voice said:

"Real, dear Albert, as the love that waits to welcome you home again. Come away from here. We can do no good, and think how long your father's heart has ached!" And leading him like a child, they went out together, and whirled away over the starlit snow to Markham House. The lights were flashing brightly from every window, and at the sound of their bells the door opened, and Mr. Markham appeared in it, the warm glow within falling like a halo over his gray hair. A look of surprise came over his face when he saw the single sleigh containing Mary and a stranger; but before he could speak, she sprang from it, and laying her hands upon his shoulders, said:

"By God's goodness, dear guardian, I have brought you a joyous Thanksgiving. Albert home again, with name unsullied as

your own." And he looked up, to see his son standing with bowed head before him.

There was no ball in Markham House that night, but the lamps burned long and bright, and the hearts within beat lighter than ever dancers' feet to music. There was one shade upon their happiness—Mark's injury, and the pain that faith betrayed ever gives. But even this was soon wiped away. A late messenger brought word that his injuries were not so serious, and that he would recover. And he did; and by a life of unfeigned faithfulness atoned for his past crime.

Mary and Albert were soon married, and the old house is now bright with childish faces, which are never so merry and happy as when they gather around grandfather on Thanksgiving Day.